The Scriptural Foundation for Christian Liberality

By R. H. LAMPKIN

Presented to

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with compliments

from the author.

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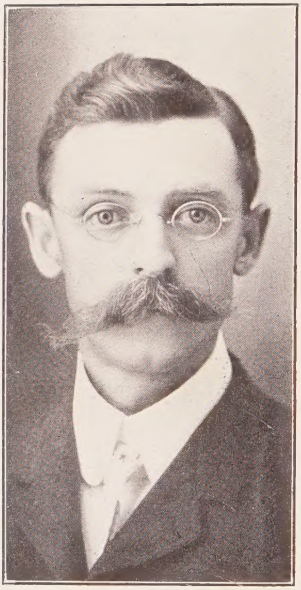

RICHARD HENRY LAMPKIN.

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R. H. LAMPKIN

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PREFACE

THE financiering of the Kingdom of God on earth is one of the distressing problems to be solved, and is a problem, not of figures, but one of equation of conditions, of deducing true values of certain quantities from others on which they depend. And any work proposing a solution of this problem must consider the question in this light. The author assumes that he has done this in this volume, and with confidence born of conviction, sends it forth upon its mission to give light in the darkness that now veils the Kingdom, hoping to bring

> "Again the golden day resuming its right,
> And ruling in just equation with the night."

LA JUNTA COL., May, 1904.

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INTRODUCTION

It gives me pleasure, having read this book in manuscript, to comply with the author's request to write a brief introduction.

This book deals with one of the vital problems before the Church to-day. The Church cannot accomplish its mission in the world until it has solved rightly the problem of the relation of its individual members to wealth. It has been handicapped for centuries, at least, by the lack of means to carry out its legitimate purposes. Two things are needed in order to correct this evil: one is a sufficient motive for giving, that is, the realization of such motive; the other is some regulative principle to govern our giving. This little book deals with both of these questions, but especially with the latter. The motive is the fact that we are not our own, having been bought with a price, and that we owe all that we have to God for the redemption He has given us in His Son, Jesus Christ. In other words, love is the supreme motive for Christian giving, but this love is grounded upon the fact of our redemption. The regulative principle advocated in this work, as

the minimum amount of our giving, is the tithing system. Men may give more, and should often give more, than one-tenth of their income, but never less. This principle is very strongly presented, and we are bound to say that the book meets satisfactorily many of the objections urged against it.

It is clear that some regulative principle is needed in the matter of giving. The mere willingness to give is not enough. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the principle of tithing, or the giving of one-tenth of our income, less the expense of securing it, was intended to be such a regulative principle, both before and after the Law of Moses, as well as during the Mosaic dispensation. It is certain that the general observance of this principle of giving, as a minimum requirement, would vastly increase the resources of the Church, greatly advance its work in the world and bring a great spiritual blessing to its members.

I commend this little book to the careful and conscientious consideration of all who wish to meet the full measure of their obligation to the kingdom of God. J. H. GARRISON.

St. Louis, July 15, 1904.

CONTENTS

PREFACE 3

INTRODUCTION 5

PART I.

CHAPTER PAGE

I. THE OFFICE OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP . 11

II. TALENTS IN THE CHURCH 15

III. THE SACRED AND THE SECULAR 18

IV. ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GOD'S OWNERSHIP 25

V. THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD . 27

VI. THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS 35

PART II.

I. THE CHURCH IN ORGANIZED EFFORT . . 49

II. CHURCH BUSINESS 55

III. THE QUESTION THAT CONFRONTS US . . 63

IV. A LAW NEEDED 71

V. WHAT IS THE LAW? 81

PART III.

I. TITHING CONSIDERED 89

II. WHAT THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHES . 94

III. THE EARLY CHURCH 105

IV. THE LAW IN ITS RELATION TO THE SPIRITUAL 112

V. 123

VI. SOME PRACTICAL QUESTIONS 134

PART I

CHAPTER I

THE OFFICE OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP.

"He that cannot paint must grind the colors."

THE word *office*, as used in religious thought, carries with it the idea of delegated authority by the appointment of men, and is confined mainly to this idea. But this, while true in the main, is yet restrictive, and if, in regard to the membership, is not corrected and broadened destroys the possibility of the body of Christ—the Church—assuming its normal function. It should be understood that the appointment to any office in the church does not come from arbitrary measures given to or assumed by man, but the recognition of qualifications possessed that make fitness in the appointment. It is, "Look ye out, therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." And it was the complaint of mismanagement of the distribution of funds that necessitated the appointment and made its expediency. These men were appointed to

this office because they possessed the qualifications, and because the grace of God was quickening the church into genuine liberality.

Without recognizing this principle, congregations have been putting into office men wholly unfitted for that to which set apart. Hardly any other mistake has been more detrimental to the cause of Christ than just this one thing; even a misfit in the pulpit is not so serious. No right is given to any congregation to appoint, nor to any man to accept, any place of authority in the church for which nature and grace have not fitted him.

But there is the office of membership, which every one is fitted to perform; a function answering to the privileges and duties that are the right and order of every Christian life. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them." The Apostle Paul indicates this in another passage. "We who are many members in one body . . . all have not the same office," but that we are members of the one body indicates that we have *some* office if not the *same* office. The apt illustration of the church compared with the body that, "If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body: it is

not therefore not of the body. And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am therefore not of the body; it is not therefore not of the body. . . . But now *hath God set the members each one of them in the body*, even as it pleased him," clearly indicates the office of membership for each and every member of the body of Christ.

In the light of the above it will be seen what is really the significance of the word office. It is a charge or trust which any one is fitted to perform, which is conferred by God himself because of the new relation into which one comes as a member of the body of Christ, the Church. We have magnified the places we are given to appoint, and minimized those God appoints, when he "sets the members each one of them in the body." And as long as we are blind to this truth, we shall greatly hinder the progress of the church. As long as the individual responsibility is unrecognized or overshadowed, so long will the members of the body languish and be inert. And it is time we were coming to recognize this important truth, and make known to every confessing heart that it is saved for something as well as from something. And if the office of membership does not assume some positive form of

activity, it is wholly inadequate to hold the affections. Church membership is one of "continuous function, a quantity that has no interruption in the continuity of its real values, as the variable changes between any specified limits." The specified limits are neither ordered nor proposed by man, nor are they limits shutting out but confining to, *i. e.*, each and every member must be in continuous cooperative activity to be normal, and according to the degree they thus function with the body are they an essential element in its growth and progress. It is as much to the interest of the individual to do this as it is for the body to recognize it when done, even more so, because it is God who hath set us as members in the body.

CHAPTER II

TALENTS IN THE CHURCH.

"Every man cannot be vicar of Bowden."

THE assembly privileges, flowing out of congregational organization and the conduct of public worship, has accumulated much in all these centuries that cannot be accounted for in principle or practice, if a rigid scriptural rule were allowed. And it is a question whether or not much of the usefulness of church members is not lost or destroyed because of the emphasis we have placed upon the privileges of the public assembly, to the neglect of the importance of the individual life and character outside these privileges. The finished product of the modern pastor, with the air of professional clericalism about him, is one of the results, and the divorcement from any vital interest and activity upon the part of the greater majority, is another.

If you would fully comprehend what the above suggests, just take an observant view of the situation which presents itself. See the number of organizations necessary, the number of committees and sub-committees in each, see

the need of meetings of each organization, each committee, and add thereto the regular meetings of the church proper, and what does it all mean? As for a day of rest, for the active Christian now, this is impossible. And though unintended, is it not true that if one is to be recognized in all this, he must be either the chairman or a member of a committee? Is it not also true that one's ability to take some part in the public meetings, called services, is largely the measure of his Christian activity? If one has this bent of mind he is pressed into service, and if he has not, he is moved to think he is failing in his share of the work. The talents of the church are thought to lie along these lines, and in religion the ability to pray or speak in public, or lead in meeting, and to do these with facility, is to be considered talented. The business of the Lord is too much looked upon as a thing of the tongue, a readiness of speech, forgetting that

> "In all labor there is profit;
> But the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury."

Have we not passed by the talents that are as much needed in the church, and which to draw out would save many a man as a man, and for the church as a member? Are the professional man, the business man, and the

laborer to be enlisted by getting them to make talks? Are they to be impressed with the idea that a natural aptitude in this direction, or the acquired habit, is the largest measure of their usefulness in the church?

The mutual business of both the pulpit and the pew is to live Christian lives, but is this and a service like the above the whole measure of the office of church membership? a realization of the talents in the church? It ought never to be a question (outside of personal relations to holiness) whether one can speak, sing, or pray in public, for in any or all of these we might be wholly deficient. Even the attendance upon public worship, while necessary, and which is erroneously called service, ought never to be considered the only thing, nor but just a small part of the thing necessary. When the needs (not wants) of the body are met, when the purity of the life and purposes is conserved, then the life, and all that grows out of it, ought to be more possible of consecration to the work and worship of God; something that would be soul-satisfying, something that would fill the void of the heart in the weekday to praise and magnify the name of our heavenly Father on Sunday. And until the talents of the

church are understood as furnishing this need of the individual soul, there will always be a deficiency in worship in the public assembly.

CHAPTER III

THE SACRED AND THE SECULAR.

"A man's reach must exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for?"

THE real problem lies in an undiscovered path, and it is one of the strange anomalies that it has remained undiscovered so long; it is the secret that a man's calling has a significance not before recognized. You cannot separate a man's calling from his personality or his life. It is the personality that usually influences the choosing of one's vocation. In theological thought the person of the believer "stands related to substance, *in the person being the living manifestation*, in this sense, of the common nature in the individual." If the person and life of the believer is holy, it stands to reason that the vocation must not only not vitiate that holiness, but become in some measure an aid, for the capacity for a man's being ought not in the nature of things to be overbalanced by his capabilities for doing, and

cannot be so in the providence of a wise God. More or less distinctly in all religions is the thought expressed, that because of a man's relation to supreme power, certain things are obligations in him, as well as other things are to be avoided at the peril of suffering, and this is more truly manifest in the Christian religion than all others, even the Mosaic institution. And it must be expected that the Christian religion, as a remedial system of reconciliation—"an institution for bringing man back to God"—would impose obligations in the very things that most occupied his time and his talents, and that would bind him anew to love, serve and delight in God. But we have come to make a distinction right here that violates this principle. The distinction of the works of man being sacred and secular, calling those sacred that are directly in the line of religious work, and those secular that are not. This distinction without a difference cannot be borne out in principle if the Scriptures furnish any light. As our ideas are associated in the nature of spiritual things directly, there may be a small measure of truth in this, that the minister's calling has a spiritual significance peculiarly its own as differing from professions and business; but as

it concerns the individual, and directly as he may be interested and connected with church life, it is no more sacred than these latter. The carpenter's bench is as sacred as the minister's pulpit, and the associations of the same may be made as hallowed to the toiler thereat as the sacred desk is to the expounder of the truth, and if it cannot be made so, then the minister has an unreasonable expectation in saving the carpenter to and for the church. And if the ministry does not know this, it is time it should, for herein,

> "New foes arise,
> Threatening to bind men's souls with
> Secular chains."

For instead of growing together, the sacred gathering increment from the secular, they have grown apart, the latter absorbing all. "In our earthly modes of thinking we push the sacred and secular far apart, as if they were two different worlds, or, at any rate, opposite hemispheres of the same world, with but few points of contact between them." To the ministry alone is ascribed *the sacred*, while the body of the membership is engaged in secular pursuits. As a result, the tide of material progress has not favored the Church, nor brought the praiseworthy approval of the "Giver of every

good and perfect gift." The Church was never richer in income nor poorer in adequate return; covetousness is the besetting sin of to-day. Of all the serious problems confronting the Church, the material progress and prosperity that is hers, is the greatest. "For it is to be considered," says Scott, in his Christian Life, "that men of secular life and conversation are generally so engaged in the business and affairs of this world, that they rarely acquire skill enough in religion to conduct themselves safely to heaven through all those difficulties and temptations that lie in their way."

But the sacred and secular are one, and to separate them in thought or practice is to separate us from our true relations with God. The natural order of things is disturbed when we expect the capacity for a man's being to be contradicted by his capabilities for doing. If the man is holy, the things he does must be sacred, and it is not to be doubted but that the Word of God would so treat this matter as to indicate the true sacredness of life in its dominant phase. "It is not more hurtful than wonderful how generally even good men look upon the temporalities of life as merely the material for gain—sordid gain; calling commerce the god of this world, as with the same

propriety and truth they speak of money as "the root of all evil." But temporalities are appointed by Providence for the good of man, that he may make friends and lay up treasure in heaven; perversion and abuse alone make them impotent in spiritual force and power. The Saviour himself rebukes us for letting the sons of this world be wiser in this respect than the sons of light, and encourages us to make friends by the means of the mammon of unrighteousness. In fact, it is inconceivable that the increase and income from a man's exertions sustain no relation to his spiritual progress, when it must be admitted they have so vital a part in his moral degeneration. The law of both nature and morals is that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; if man soweth to the flesh he shall of the flesh reap corruption, but if he sow to the Spirit, he shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

The real meaning of one's vocation is the opportunity for exercise therein granted for one's faith. The work that we do, which gives increase in material things, is a sacred work, because it is taking God into partnership —becoming his co-workers. "The secular is the sacred on the underside. It is a part of

that great whole we call duty, and in our earthly callings, if they are pure and honest, we may hear the echo of a heavenly call . . . they both look toward heaven, and if the heart be only set in that direction, they lead too up toward heaven."

The false idea throws the whole life of the church into disproportionate order and arrangement, for the larger proportion of time is necessarily devoted to material things, and if we conceive this as secular and separated from the sacred, our whole thought and work will partake of the nature conducive to worldly instead of spiritual things, and the inevitable result will be the destruction of faith towards God. The daily occupancy of the mind must afford aid to spiritual growth, and the work that prevents this is not the work in which the believer should engage; but if we can make the trend of things to lead to inspiring and helpful thoughts, if we look to the end and see a prosperity in which the Lord has a hand, and which we recognize, it would be easy to remember him first in the division of the harvest. This is the solution for filling empty pews with earnest worshippers, of filling empty church treasuries with liberal offerings, of filling empty mouths with food and praise until

the land shall ring with songs of praise and rejoicing. Make all life sacred, consecrate every counting room, every work bench, every forge, every kitchen, every parlor—every vocation, as we consecrate every offering, every prayer and every song, and we shall all "praise the Lord for his goodness and his wonderful works to the children of men."

CHAPTER IV

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GOD'S OWNERSHIP.

"The earth is Jehovah's,
And the fulness thereof;
The world and they that dwell
Therein."—Ps. 24:1.

In this materialistic age, men question whether God has any concern in the affairs of this life, thinking that the laws are fixed and there can be no deviation meditated by the divine mind, and consequently whatever bearing the things of this mundane sphere might have upon our relationship to God, is entirely lost sight of. The Lord may claim "the earth as his and every beast of the forest," but man disputes his ownership of the "fullness of the earth," and "the cattle upon a thousand hills," and whenever man lays his hand upon the raw material, and produces the finished product he holds to it as his own, and will fill his barns and his bins and propose to "eat, drink and be merry." It is no exaggeration to say this, for the facts prove that men in general think that God has given a quit-claim-deed to the whole earth. The secular stands for self, the sacred for God, and they have

parted company. Few are they who recognize any right of God's ownership and themselves as only stewards. The limits are reached if they allow the surplus as that to which he may have any reasonable expectations.

It is here the first step is to be taken toward conciliatory measures of submission upon the part of man toward God in the matter of Christian liberality. Man must first know that he is but an entrusted steward in all that he counts as his own.

The obligations that should direct our affections, desires and intentions, in religion, must have this precedence of relation to God as a foundation upon which to rest, and that relation is our stewardship. If we cannot at first accept this—that we are only stewards—the duties and obligations that flow out of our covenant of faith must then be our guide. The facts and conditions before the church for settlement will make conclusive evidence. But we know no better way to show this than to consider some of the parables of our Lord bearing upon this very point, which we shall do in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER V

THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD.

"And he said also unto the disciples, There was a certain rich man, who had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he was wasting his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, What is this that I hear of thee? render the account of thy stewardship; for thou canst be no longer steward. And the steward said within himself, What shall I do, seeing that my Lord taketh away the stewardship from me? I have not strength to dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. And calling to him each one of his Lord's debtors, he said to the first, How much owest thou unto my Lord? And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bond, and sit down quickly and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. He saith unto him, Take thy bond, and write fourscore. And his Lord commended the unrighteous steward because he had done

wisely: for the sons of this world are for their own generation wiser than the sons of the light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles. He that is faithful in a very little, is faithful also in much: and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?"—Luke 16:1-12.

Having discussed the question of God's ownership, we will find that this parable, among other parables, teaches this—that we are only stewards of a wise Providence. "Let us face the facts of our existence here, and understand the terms on which we live in this present world." Are we masters or stewards? If we do not ascertain the terms on which we are living and using what we use, the judgment that will be pronounced upon ourselves will be the same as upon this man—"unrighteous stewards," "wasting our Lord's goods." We shall be unjust simply *because we*

have not regarded ourselves as stewards. If we have omitted this—what was our due to God and man—the likelihood is, we have in possession, or have wasted upon self, what belonged to the Lord to whom we are but as stewards.

No one can question that the man of the above parable had no right of possession to the things under his hand. He was steward and not master, and he was accused of wasting his master's goods. He had not been faithful in that which was another's. The only question in the application for us, is, In what measure and in what things will it apply to us, and is it really applicable to the question in hand of God's universal ownership? It will not serve our purpose without the possibility of our reaching some conclusion coincident with these ideas.

The context shows in a number of verses that Jesus had been talking to "Pharisees who were lovers of money," and to "publicans and sinners," and if we are not sinners in our trust, then we are "sons of light," and so the principle is applicable to us. As we are advised as "sons of light" to be as wise as the "sons of this world," we can trace back in the deduction, that if we are "sons of light,"

then we are stewards. It is not a question of wealth that constitutes a stewardship, for if it were, then one of the means by which we could make friends in the eternal tabernacles is disallowed to the most of us. The possibility of thus limiting the parable is cut out by the statement in the connection that "he that is faithful *in a very little* is faithful also in much: and he that is unrighteous *in a very little* is unrighteous also in much. The connection seems to be this: "You allege you have too little of this world's goods to be much concerned with the truth which I have now announced; but this is a mistake, for fidelity does not depend on the amount entrusted to you, but on the use to which that amount, however small, is put by you; and that, again, depends on your sense of responsibility as a steward of God." Let us not forget that it is the Lord of the steward that is rich, and not the steward.

But the whole parable must turn upon some germane thought, "the sum of which," says Calvin, "is that we should deal humanely and benignantly with our neighbors, that when we come to the tribunal of God, the fruit of our liberality may return to us." The unjust steward took what was another's, and with

a worldly-wise beneficence, made friends who would receive him when his stewardship failed. And we are taught in this to take that which comes to us, which is not our own but the Lord's, and use it for laying up treasure in heaven.

We have said the steward's unjustness was the failure to recognize the position of trust he occupied, but how was he wasting his master's goods? We are directed how to find the answer in his shrewdness. "What shall I do?" says he, "for I am going to be thrown out of a job." He had had an easy time at the expense of his Lord, and he is not going to be thrown out until he can fix a soft place in which to light, and now he will lay his companions of revel under obligations. Unlike the prodigal, he has the resources of another to draw upon, and he is not in such hard lines. He had been pilfering for self, and he would just steal a little more. He had been using his office for his own selfish enjoyment, leading a hilarious life, wasting his Lord's goods in "riotous living," with companions among whom no doubt his Lord's creditors were numbered, for the readiness with which these creditors accepted the terms of settlement, suggests their collusion with his villainy.

Even the most cursory reader will observe that here there is a point of contact with the parable of the prodigal son. The prodigal is said to have "wasted his substance," the steward to have "wasted" his master's "goods"; the design of Jesus evidently being to teach that there are other ways of misusing the portion which our heavenly Father gives us than by "riotous living." The steward maintained a degree of self-righteous respectability, while the prodigal led a dissolute life, knowing no restraint in the gratification of his lust and appetite. This suggests also that the "faring sumptuously every day" of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, and the "hiding in the earth" of the one talent in the parable of the talents, maintain in principle a very striking resemblance.

Jesus spoke this parable in the presence of others as well as his disciples. He chose, however, a common fault found among these other hearers, which also represents an all too common and prevalent sin among unwise believers to-day. But what this man did to save something out of the ruin coming upon him, is what we must do in our repentance when the burden of our sin is shown. We must convert the perishable mammon of unrighteous-

ness into the imperishable true riches. We should now see that what we have belongs to another, but that through faithfulness we may finally come into our own. We must do all along with what is entrusted to us, what this man did only at the last. We might stay in the appointed place as long as we wish, and have altogether the bounty of the Lord under our hand if we are but making friends in the eternal tabernacles, and laying up enduring wealth in the skies which shall be our very own —inalienable possessions.

But the eschatological thought must not be so prominent in its rewards as the idea of the wisdom to guide us in "this present generation." This wisdom involves the character built beforehand, and the conscious approval of our Lord in the just exercise of our trust. Like Cornelius, our prayers and alms will go up as memorials before God. The Apostle Peter would commend and say, our "charity covereth a multitude of sins." Paul would warn and encourage, for he would say through Timothy, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God . . . that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing

to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

The things of this life are "least," but that which is entrusted to us here and now is a test of character, and according as we are or are not faithful in our management of them, we shall or shall not receive that which is greatest hereafter. The things of this life shall fail, but upon a right use of them we can build us a foundation against all time to come. The things of this life are the dross of unrighteousness, but we can exchange them for the real and true riches. The things we now have in possession are another's, and we shall be despoiled of them, but we shall have after awhile that which is our very own.

CHAPTER VI

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS.

"For [the kingdom of heaven is] as when a man, going into another country, called his servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to each according to his several ability; and he went on his journey. Straightway he that received the five talents went and traded with them, and made other five talents. In like manner he also that received the two gained other two. But he that received the one went away and digged in the earth, and hid his Lord's money. Now, after a long time the Lord of those servants cometh, and maketh a reckoning with them. And he that received the five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: lo, I have gained other five talents. His Lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. And he also that received the two talents came and said, Lord, thou

deliveredst unto me two talents: lo, I have gained other two talents. His Lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. And he also that received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter; and I was afraid, and went away and hid thy talent in the earth; lo, thou hast thine own. But his Lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I did not scatter; thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received back mine own with interest. Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give unto him that hath the ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away. And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."—Matthew 25:14-30.

The chief points of the parable which bear

upon our topic, are comprehended in the four following divisions as important truths concerning work for the kingdom of God:—

1. The talents disposed of are the property of their Lord, and his ownership never ceases. A long-time tarrying, a continued use that turns the property into double increase, does in no sense transfer the ownership.

2. The servants to whom the talents are committed are not hired servants of their Lord, but purchased property. He had the imperative right to ask what he did of them, and was gracious in the trust he committed to them.

3. The talents were distributed "to each according to his several ability," which made them relatively equal. The groundwork of their individual character was recognized, and not abolished by subjection to a common standard.

4. It follows that their lord had the right to expect an increase from the invested property, as it and the servants were both his. The servants could but justly, and with gratitude, recognize this in a reasonably proportionate payment as a debt imposed. They were solely dependent upon him. Their living—the bulk of the increase—went to them, and nothing but dishonesty and laziness could cause them to

insist on keeping to themselves that with which they had been entrusted for the good of others.

1. Certain features in the parable fix, without question, the continued ownership of the lord over the committed talents, and that the unprofitable servant does not offer this as an excuse, but speaks of "thy talent" and "thine own," is a feature that is usually overlooked in seeking to bring out the other important principle on which faithful service is valued in the divine kingdom. And while the latter is the most specific feature indirectly conveyed, yet if the ownership is not kept prominently in mind, the force of the required service is weakened. If the unfaithful, one-talented, could ever have gotten the question of rightful ownership out of mind, he would have been as little troubled as those are to-day who have long ago so disposed of their stewardship.

(a) The householder travels into a far country and tarries a long time; long enough to permit every opportunity being given the servants to manifest their character in the trust. The fig-tree was left in the garden, and additional care and effort bestowed after time had shown no fruit nor indications thereof. The characters of the servants begin immediately

to show in their actions; the profitable servants allow "no grass to grow under their feet"; they go "straightway" to their trust, while the unprofitable man but "goes away," and only to "dig" and "hide."

(b) Whatever the time to elapse before the master's return, it was sufficient for the five-talented to get out all his to interest and profit-sharing, and with such a substantial increase from large capital, it was time enough for the lesser trust to have been put out, even as a loan, to have brought a moderate return.

2. That the servants were the householder's own, his purchased property, involves another important consideration, manifesting a gracious master's rule. Here are servants provided for with the comforts and necessaries of life; it is a householder leaving his servants in possession, and adding talents to relieve the tedium of his absence and offer an incentive to the expectancy of his return. They are not left to provide for themselves, for all this, the householder remembers, is his duty to those of his own household, yet they have this to manage and prepare, the same as they did when he was present, but this is subsidiary and subservient to the exercise of the trust left with them. Like the first truth, it is this, too, that should

not be forgotten in our application of the parable. Here is the base ingratitude of the wicked servant, and we must note this. He is his lord's servant, he partakes daily of his bounty, he is clothed and fed, housed and warmed, and accepts, besides, an additional gift, which is intended to draw out his capabilities, and which, in the acceptance, it is implied he will keep as a trust. And what does the ingrate do but deny all, and call his lord "a hard master, reaping and gathering where he did not sow nor scatter." The graciousness of his lord's reply shows no begrudging of what the man had received as a member of his household, but indicates the ingratitude that would keep back what was entrusted for the good of others only. The natural increase of productive talent was prevented in withdrawing it from the channel of progress in which it was its nature to flow, and why did not this fellow put it there? His accusation against his lord indicates the character of the man, for as Richter says: "Never does a man portray his character more vividly than in his manner of portraying another." One who could make such an unjust assertion must have been troubled with something more than "fear"; his "wickedness" indicates knavery. His sin was an abuse of

opportunities more than a neglect of them, and could be nothing but defaulting with funds not his own. That the man looks upon the one talent as a limitation that cannot more than meet his own selfish wants, is the only consistent interpretation of what was his sin in the "hiding." Though he understands well enough the purpose for which the talent was given, yet he must appropriate it for his own use. Indolence alone would eat up the capital, but it does not meet the case in hand to adjudge it in this manner. The talent is a small capital committed to a measurable ability. To have even put it out on interest would not have met the requirements made of the servant, nor have returned what was conferred, for it was the servant that was receiving his sustenance to make use of the trust. This both unprofitable and wicked servant, shows the natural perversity of selfishness which can so habituate itself in misappropriation as to think the talents belong only to self. This man is not a man of timidity, who would make no investment for fear of loss, neither was there any real fear of his master, but the defiant attitude assumed, and the bold and false declaration show him to be a miserable sinner. This man could but justly be cast out from light and plenty for his

base ingratitude and defaulting use of another's bounty. This man is a fair counterpart of the unjust steward.

A too literal interpretation would make the talent to be so many dollars and cents which could be actually buried, and, too, could have been returned little the worse for burial. Though we understand the parable states the talent to have been taken away and given to him that had the ten, we believe that he did not have anything to return. What he had was opportunity correlated with his ability. He was one of those who "seemeth to have" but "hath not." In the full meaning of a talent it is impossible to keep it in its originality if buried; it must be circulating and multiplying or it is wasting. In the physical world this law is patent to all. The unused faculty dies, the unused muscle dwindles and disappears.

3. This parable does not teach that the many-talented are more faithful, or the few-talented any the less so, as influenced by the talents themselves. That the five goes to one, two to another, and one to the last, is not intended to teach any classification, but simply that the Lord recognizes the capabilities of men in the bestowal of his gifts. He gave to "each man according to his several ability."

Viewing the real sin of the unfaithful servant, his temptation was not so great as either of the others. The greater trust, and power to use, appeals more to the flesh than smaller talents. The case of the rich young ruler illustrates the power of wealth over the flesh; because "he had great possessions" he went away sorrowful when told the responsibility that was his, and that he should divide these with the poor. Now if the one talent stood for poverty the case would be different, but it stood also for necessities out of which he was to make no denial to return what was not his own. The principle of the parable covers the case of all humanity. For extreme riches or poverty God is not directly responsible, if we consider the correlation of natural and spiritual laws. A man may be poorest when he is extremely rich, or he may be richest in the very extremes of poverty. We measure these things by temporality, and they appear differently according to the relative points of view from which we behold them.

4. The imperative demand of work upon all the citizens of the kingdom is certainly the didactic significance of this parable, and we shall not be forcing the figure in the requirements of this discussion of Christian liberality,

but we wish to call attention to the main difference between this and the former parable. The former emphasizes the thought of stewardship mainly, though it touches upon the purposes of that stewardship in showing the wisdom we need to exercise, but this one enunciates the principle more practically. It gives time for its development, it shows the more common office of servant rather than an entrusted and wise supervisor of a rich man's finance, it shows the more universal distribution of opportunity according to the ability of each, and now the cardinal virtue, prompt action in the real intention of the imparted gift, the increase or doubling itself of five and five, and two and two. Nothing can more strikingly impress us with the sense of obligation "than the manner in which the religious application breaks through the parabolic form of representation." "The spiritual is shaped by the natural, so that the lowest in the scale of natural ability," for his unfaithfulness receives the pronouncement of an awful doom upon his head, however mildly we might interpret it, while the two faithful "enter into the joy of their lord." And what joy that must have been! While we must avoid the sin of the unprofitable servant, we should rather seek its avoidance in faithful

service that we may have the positive benediction of "Well done, good and faithful servant." There is a tacit understanding here of a reward for fidelity.

Trench, in his notes on the parables, gives an instructive eastern tale that runs almost parallel with this parable. It is as follows:

There went a man from home: and to his neighbors twain
He gave, to keep for him, two sacks of golden grain.
Deep in the cellar one the precious charge concealed;
And forth the other went and strewed it in his field.
The man returns at last—asks of the first his sack:
"Here, take it; 'tis the same; thou hast it safely back."
Unharmed it shows without; but when he would explore
His sack's recesses, corn there finds he now no more:
One half of all therein proves rotten and decayed,
Upon the other half have worm and mildew preyed.
The putrid heap to him in ire he doth return;
Then of the other asks, "Where is my sack of corn?"
Who answered, "Come with me, behold how it has sped,"
And took and showed him his fields with waving harvest spread.
Then cheerfully the man laughed out and cried, "This one
Had insight, to make up for the other that had none:
The letter *he* observed, but *thou* the precept sense;
And thus to thee and me shall profit grow from hence;
In harvest thou shalt fill two sacks of corn for me,
The residue of right remains in full for thee."

PART II

CHAPTER I

THE CHURCH IN ORGANIZED EFFORT.

It ought to be conspicuously evident that there is a very grave fault somewhere in the organization or effort of the church as now conducted, when with the undertaking before her of winning the world to her Lord, she so poorly conducts her financial affairs. The ever present and never settled consideration is "how can the present organism find its real function in the expression of its faith," for the individual *by whom* organized and for the individual *for whom* organized? The question is not an aggregate but an individual one, for individuality is before organization. The assembly privileges, flowing out of organization, are right and necessary, but there must be more purpose in them and more effectiveness through them. They are not the *summum bonum* of a Christian experience, but the means of its expression. Public worship must thus be put beyond the toiler's fellowship, but that fellowship must be the groundwork of its erection, the outcome of necessary things of an everyday life, and the expression of that life.

How, then, can the present organization and sub-organizations furnish the means for enlisting the interest of all its parts? Under the present system and the false views that are held, they are but makeshifts, serving as correctives, but candid confessions of weakness that are but temporarily remedial. They propose no more than to enlist an interest in one or more works of the church, by specializing that work, and laboring towards the end of its accomplishment. And yet there is no organization, outside of the church proper, nor any number combined, that has enlisted, or can enlist, the whole membership. Shall organization be continued until the need is comprehended? Is it not a question already of over-organization—more mechanism than there is energy to run?

We are not entering any complaint against good works thus done, nor questioning the zeal and earnestness of those who are so nobly struggling against such heavy odds; we are asking, rather, a consideration of the facts that confront us. The manner and purpose usually found in all organized effort is not in itself to be condemned, nor ought it to be abolished. But passing the necessity of organized effort, which no one will question, to do things "de-

cently and in order," but not forgetting the inexpediency of at least some superfluous and abortive attempts, it must be considered that organization is not the end, but the means to the end. For what is the real condition of the church to-day? Have you, dear reader, stopped to consider this matter? We are prone to think few people have any realization of the real conditions, and the story these conditions tell. If the present arrangement and management can be called a system, we note that it puts the wits of the wisest to weariness to follow any liberal policy in religious undertakings.

The local work is nearest best done, because it is nearest at hand; but what a struggle! A settled minister can hardly conserve the forces at hand, and the congregation is hard to find that, in its maturity, has maintained the ratio of work to numbers from its inception. The yearly periodical visits of an evangelist is as necessary to quicken her pulse as to arouse sinners. And where is the congregation that shows the mature development of its individual members that time and the Lord ought to yield? The enlargement, if any, comes from the impact of forces without more than from within.

Let us take, for example, a local congregation for illustration. And this is not only a

real case, but a fair sample generally to be found. There is a congregation in a fairly prosperous town of four thousand people, that has been organized about twelve years and more, and for the most time has had regular preaching by the assistance of the State Board. They were soon in a little house of their own, which was afterwards sold, and another modern, but thoroughly equipped brick structure took its place, the entire cost of which was about $5,000. The current expenses for preaching, janitor, coal, lights, music, and interest of a debt which they yet owe on their property, amount to about ninety dollars per month. The membership numbers about one hundred and the contributors about fifty, with a pledged amount of about fifty-five dollars, which was afterwards raised to eighty-seven. But some fell short in payment, others moved away, and the year finds them in debt with a deficit of more than two hundred dollars. A small amount for missions, seventy dollars or more, was given, but the first payment of three hundred dollars on a debt of fifteen hundred held by the Extension Board was not met. Suppers and entertainments assisted largely, as it was, and a collector was necessary. Almost no work of benevolence was done, nor thought of. But

in that town there were forty or more members who had not united with that congregation, and yet everything was more than ordinarily harmonious and the people respectable, and so considered by the entire community. None were rich, but few were really poor. The estimated income of this people was about thirty thousand dollars, a low estimate. The same conditions could be numbered in the thousands with congregations like situated.

Now this situation forms the largest measure of hope for the revenue that is to conduct our missionary enterprises and benevolent institutions, and the average is fair in the sum total of offerings ($75) to these organizations. These local works may be substantially established, but the amount that oftentimes is sent in from the outside to assist, it may be many years before it is ever balanced by missionary offerings that come out.

It is not for lack of organization that this and other congregations thus have to struggle, for they usually have their full complement. The minister, the elders and deacons, aid society, organist, choir and janitor for the church; superintendent, assistant, secretary, treasurer and teachers for the Sunday-school; president, secretary, treasurer and committees for the

senior C. E., and the same for the junior society; the C. W. B. M. for interest and instruction in missions among the women; and altogether very thoroughly organized.

Then outside the congregation we have our State, Home and Foreign Boards, all well and thoroughly organized, yet their burden and constant care is not the execution of plans and purposes, and the expenditure of moneys, but the ceaseless round of bringing into line the churches to support the work these organizations are set to carry on. By far the larger part of their work is how to get the funds than how to expend them, and more than two-thirds of that which they do get would never be gotten, if they did not forever keep at us. The truth of the matter is, the system works by outward compulsion and not by the inward impelling of the grace of giving. Church and mission boards are always without adequate funds to further half the works proposed, and more effort is spent in securing available funds than in carrying out plans. But it is not an organic trouble with the body ecclesiastic, but a functional disorder of the members in the body, for the life of the body is the sum of the functions of its various parts and members.

CHAPTER II

CHURCH BUSINESS.

THE primary meaning of business is "that which busies one, or that which engages the time, attentions, or labor of any, as his principal concern and interest." In this chapter, however, we shall not discuss that which is the "principal interest and concern" of the church, but a phase which deals with the financial conduct, and even the mercantile transactions, by which the church attempts to fulfill the mission of her "principal interest and concern." If there be another more serious problem than this one; if there be another in which more vast and far-reaching consequences are involved; if there be another more stupendous proposition, in proportion to the sum invested, which is the "principal concern and interest" of the Church of Jesus Christ, we are safe in saying that it has never come to light. We have stood before it as if dazed, and the astounding fact is that this most profound problem is the most neglected one in the church. If there is any question about the consideration of which the church displays a more querulous temper, we have not as yet

heard of it. Why is this? Can any one answer?

But the church has not been idle in the matter. She has sought to answer the problem, and it is to just a few of these abortive attempts that we shall next devote ourselves. We have to face facts as we shall find them, and shall attempt to consider the real and palpable conditions as known to us.

The beginning point of the investigation must be the local, congregational organization. And the run of circumstances, from its inception to permanency, affords only the variety that varying communities and circumstances necessarily require, but throughout, from birth to growth, the same things in principle are involved. There are exceptions, which are as distinct in type as the races of men, but these exceptions are the proof of the rule.

After organization the essential thing is a distinctly church home, and through the routine of sacrifices and suppers, savings and sales, servings and socials, the organization goes till they have the house and its accompanying debt. The tower or steeple may have helped enlarge the latter, and are as comparable as the conversation of two youngsters as to whose house had the most ornaments. One little

fellow said, "We've got a cupola on our house," while the other, with withering scorn, said, "That ain't nothin'; we've got a mortgage on ours!"

Next is, and always is, the maintenance of a preacher. The subscription paper is out, and after much effort the required amount is nearly raised, but rarely is it that more than this item is considered, and the current expenses are usually left to take care of themselves, to be met probably by the "collections." Rare, also, is it that *all* subscriptions are paid, and the very unusual thing is the increase of a subscription by any one, yet these things have been done by force of circumstances. Every organization involves, from the start, the question of money obligations, and they are always present and always increasing.

These are not all of this matter, for you have the missionary enterprises as the logical sequence involved in your organization, and with the instinct of bees they come for their right of store. But what congregation foresees these as *a priori* necessities, and not as following upon causative energies? But when we have fallen down, then the aid society comes in to help us, and right nobly do they come to the rescue.

The business of the church has nearly always looked upon the end, the dollar, that alone would meet the exigency of the present need, and entirely lost sight of the means, at least of the deteriorating effect of the means, by which it was acquired. Within and without the church, the present system of financiering the kingdom is one of the crying shames of Christendom. The church has come to be looked upon, even by some of her professing adherents, as a beggar whose importunities are to be dreaded as the plague. The world no less dreads her mendicancy; and the practices followed by some are enough to repel its good will and kill its respect. There, too, has been a measure of concession made by the church to worldly pleasures and practices that has practically nullified the convictions of the Spirit in regard to sin. There is no question but what the complaint made that "the church is always crying for money" is true; the constant and persistent appeal for money is a "hue and a cry" dreaded by a class of church members as the "hue and cry" of the law that in earlier days was raised when felons were pursued. After we have looked at some examples of business projects of the church, we shall then pay our respects to the unjust complaint made

against her because of her appeals for money.

A portion of the church will sometimes plan and push a little scheme of their own. They will spend one day in converting some household provisions, that cost nothing (?), into delicious, toothsome, inside wearing apparel; will spend the next day and evening in labor and worry, sale and hurry that fatigues and frets, only to cajole the rest of the members, and a few outsiders, into opening their unconsecrated pocket-books and capacious stomachs, for profit. They keep only one side of the account, and after that is footed up, there is great rejoicing over the splendid success of the affair. One side does all of the giving, and the other all of the receiving, a sort of scheme of "robbing Peter to pay Paul."

These schemes that are devised to cajole people out of money in spite of themselves, are on the same moral plane as the decoy duck of the hunter; in method like the deer-stalker who carries a bell and gives the huntsman an opportunity to bag the game while the deer is listening to the sound of the bell.

The exigencies of each recurring case, and the palatable and pleasurable success of the event, are but a temporary effort and effect, and with the large outlay necessary it makes profit

impossible. And it is strange that the system has not long ago been abandoned as futile and fruitless. That it is unscriptural is manifest in the facts—a derogation of God's law and a detraction from the religion we profess. In it we do not sow to the grace of giving, and cannot expect the fruits of that grace. The motives are only temporary in appeal and effect, the limit is reached in the satiety of the senses. The ephemeral popularity of these plans can never suggest any thought of obligation, and no such claims rest in the minds of the patrons of these enterprises.

We cannot impugn the good intentions of the promoters of these things; they are noble in comparison with the mean selfishness that needs the tickling to relax its purse-strings, and when set beside that class of people who feel no compunctions of conscience in repudiating an honest debt, or are so shiftless as to let others assume their portion of the burden, they shine as the brightness of the stars in the firmament. But what can be the matter with a religion which leaves its urgent call to be wafted upon the wings of fickle fancy and precarious appetite?

Does the church keep up its din of cry for money? Shame upon shame that we have to

confess it! And he that reiterates it in rebuke for silence, does not know the shame he heaps upon the virtuous grace of Christian liberality. The cry is but the cry for bread of starving children. If there is too large a measure of self-sufficiency in the life of the church, it is but the necessity that would maintain the self-respect for the house of God. When the church goes out before the world with outreached hand for help, and keeps back in her coffers the real wealth of the kingdom, and in her preferred mendicancy she goes about clothed in the garments of respectability, she is indeed lost to all pride and self-respect, but if at home she presents her cause and need, when that has never reached her Lord's intentions through her, then it is only the unregenerate, the covetous and the miserly who will repudiate their own obligations. The cry would never be heard if selfish greed and covetousness were not the besetting sin of the church.

The mistake we have made has been our timidity that is childish, and if ever we heed the voices that would scare us from our task of building the walls of Zion, instead of strengthening our hands with larger undertakings to awaken strength of character and make appeal to manhood, we shall not dwell within the

walls of a peaceful Jerusalem. The plans ought to be so large as to become an imperative call to every member of the body of Christ.

CHAPTER III

THE QUESTION THAT CONFRONTS US.

"Man does not live by bread alone."

We must have the spirit of the apostle to the Gentiles to get at this question; we must "become all things to all men that by all means we may save some." An exceptional solicitude should attract us toward those who have not carried the weight of the kingdom upon their hearts, for we shall find we are dealing, for the most part, with very children. The smoking flax must not be quenched, the bruised reed must not be broken.

The manner of conducting the business of the church to-day is to be deprecated, but as this has been the solution many have found as expeditious, if not expedient, we must consider its long standing and the educational effect it has had, and that these things cannot be overthrown in a moment. Having concurred with this prevalent notion that Christian liberality is left wholly to the inclinations of the individual, we find we have to combat the evil with the harmlessness of doves but with the wisdom of serpents—taking our lesson, in some measure, from the men of this world.

Fortified also with the armor of an ever present and pressing problem to maintain an existence, there it is, "never shamed as arrogant selfishness of prosperity, and never mitigated as only embittered resentments of want" —*the question of a living.* It is so high and deep that genuine Christian liberality has never sounded its bottom nor climbed its height. If any form of infidelity is universally denied, it is "the failure to provide for one's own"; all repudiate it in theory if not in fact.

"What is a living?" This, to be answered anywhere, would be found so very different somewhere else as to involve the question in uncertitude. The answers in different countries would be as far apart as the countries themselves. Even the answer of one man in a community would be radically different from that of another. Difference of birth and station makes a difference in both opinion and fact. There never was a query propounded that could equal this one for a possible variety of answers, and if the church is to await its bounty at the door of this problem, it will be the church and not man that will go begging. There is a solution to be found before we get here, and it can be more clearly shown by ad-

dressing ourselves to this confronting dilemma than in passing it by.

A man looks at his income if it is small and he has a struggle "to keep the wolf from the door," and he does not think he has a living. It may be a dollar a day, but another man who gets three dollars a day may look at his wages as hardly a living. These two extremes afford a difference of opinion. So it is not the gross income by which we can measure a living. Station, the locality, and the number in family varies. A small house, frugal fare, decent clothing, and a common education will answer for one, while a more expensive house of spacious rooms, generous board, fine clothing and a costly education another may deem essential to comfort and respect. In the face of this, what is a living, and who can fix the limit? The cases are where conditions like the above have been reversed, yet the excuses are just as valid to each, while existence will go on; but the church is neither richer by the one, nor poorer for the other. We wonder, oftentimes, how some people do on as little as they do, in their reverses. Their wages may be cut in half, sickness and death make inroads upon their small earnings, yet they seem to fare well, and finally recover lost ground. Some-

times they come to actual want, but there are thousands of these who do not starve—they live.

A family of six may be easily cared for on fifty dollars a month, but another of three, next door, will find it difficult to manage with seventy-five. The matter of appearances, the style of living that pride suggests, makes a fair competency but a pittance for them. A third case may be illustrated by a single man who inherits a small income from a father who was in the habit of spending fifty thousand a year, but inherits, as well, a vested interest in his revenue. Public expectations, and, worst of all, habits, have been formed on such a costly model, that he is perplexed and really poor with five thousand a year. Each of these three branches of modifications has innumerable offshoots, going to show how this matter is to be measured; and if the church is to receive any share, after the question of a living is answered, the scale of adjustment must aim to have the possessor keep pace with bounty, and ease the struggle to noble acknowledgment. Even poverty's grind must not be driven away from the blessedness of giving. But as our social and industrial life becomes more and more intense,

the gulf between the workingman and the church becomes wider and deeper.

If there is not some answer for this disproportion of circumstances, some solution for the questions they raise, how is the interest and fellowship of either to be enlisted for the church? Suppose the local work does get into financial straits, or a call goes over the land for a quarter of a million for missions, how are you ever going to reach these men? There is the future to be provided for, and no man knows what the morrow will bring forth. If "a man must live," which is an article found in the creeds of all men, what answer can we give to the *must?* This dangerous half truth means that the first duty is to provide for this life. The tempter once sought to overcome our Lord with the same sophistry, and was answered that "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." There is a portion of this world's goods with which we are intrusted, that is as dangerous to tamper with as the forbidden fruit of the Garden of Eden.

"If a man would save his life he must lose it," which is a denial of the above half truth. Presuming that man's first duty is to seek for self, it denies that we should "seek first the

kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you." It means that we shall lay up for ourselves first, then lay up treasure in heaven. It means that if a man has to work hard all the week and feels too tired to go to church on the Lord's day, that the physical man must come first, if the spiritual has to starve. It means, to some, that a man has a right to steal if he is starving, and to do so is no sin in the sight of God.

If this doctrine is true, Abraham sinned in offering Isaac; the Israelites were doing no wrong in crying for bread in the wilderness; that Jesus would not have sinned had he turned the stones into bread; that there would have been no martyrs in the early Christian ages; that there would be no church to-day.

God has not forgotten the life of man, neither in the physical nor spiritual sense. "Behold the birds of the heavens that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe

the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall not he much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? . . . But seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." This is not a denial of "a man must live," but shows the only real assurance of life. "A man must live," is an ungrateful imputation against a gracious Providence, "in which we live and move and have our being;" it is a wicked excuse for withholding what is God's due, and a want of repentance that would restore fourfold. Is a man more just than God? for that *a man must live* is recognized by man. For services rendered a man generally gets his living, and something besides. The industrious usually profit enough that they care well for their own,—have a good home; yet neither they nor their employers think this any more than right. But the employer expects, also, to get profit for the work that the laborer does after he has paid him his wages. Will not our heavenly Father do as much, and more besides? "If we give good gifts unto our children, how much more will our heavenly Father give good gifts unto them that ask him?" And if we grant the right to our fellowmen to profit by our labors, shall we deny it to God? And as

God owns us, our time and our talents, is it more than right that he should have a fair return, when the whole investment is his?

The church, unlike all other organizations, requires but the professed faith to the fundamental facts of Christianity, and the attendant conformity to the institutions that the Lord has established, for membership. And rich and poor, high and low, learned and ignorant, find welcome in her folds, and the charity thereof covers a multitude of sins. But God recognizes every one of his laws in causing "all things to work together for man's good," and while it is a fitting industry that gives us the fat of the land, it is also the recognition of "God's purposes" in the call that causes *all things* to work together for good, and neither can be slighted and the intended good follow.

CHAPTER IV

A LAW NEEDED.

"I had not known coveting, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."—Rom. 7:7.

It is the common consent of the majority, that under the Christian dispensation, there is no law regulating the disposal of one's possessions; "that the idea of such a duty is without foundation; that we are each at liberty to choose what portion of his possessions he shall give away, from the nearest approach to nothing, upward." Is such the case? and is it conceivable? so "that if one give a tenth, and another a ninetieth, and another a thousandth part, they differ not in this,—that one is liberal, the other covetous, and the third a wretch, but in this,—that the one is liberal, the other less liberal, and the other less so still; each of them practicing a virtue, a voluntary virtue, only in various degrees? This is the plain meaning and practical application of a notion which floats in undefined thought, and is often expressed in vague language by many excellent people,—a notion about Christianity leaving the amount of liberality to the self-

imposed duty, or purpose, or inclination possessing the individual." The present system has grown out of this theory, founded upon the idea, it would seem, that little or no such grace is to be found in the believer's heart, or if so, it is but a fickle fancy, that needs to be wooed, but can never be wed.

"If this view be correct, then it follows that in Christian morals we have a virtue which has no minimum limit, no expiring point; which continues to be a virtue down to within a hair's breadth of nothing, no matter how largely mixed with the opposite vice. . . . Is liberality the one virtue which Christianity has abandoned, in this cold world, to every man's whim, which she never pronounces violated so long as it is not totally renounced and abjured? Surely there is some point far short of nothing, at which gifts cease to be 'liberal' and begin to be 'vile'; at which a giver ceases to be 'bountiful' and deserves to be called a 'churl.' "

Touching, as this matter does, the correlation of faith and works, it cannot be a mere caprice in man's make-up. The question can hardly be so indefinite, so liable, in the foibles and frailties of human nature, to utter annihilation. "If Christianity has left benevolence

entirely to private decision, it also follows *that, while those branches of expenditure which regard our self-interest are regulated by fixed circumstances, that which is for the glory of God is at the mercy of chance.*" "Every claim of self-interest has its proportion not ill-defined; is it probable that while every outlay that nourishes self is regular, that only outlay which tends to free us from earth, and connects our hopes with a better country, is precisely the one which the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ has left to be the football of passion or accident?"

This cannot be! It, in all reason, requires some ground upon which to rest, some defined boundary, that both revelation and the solidarity of the race would fix as a fair proportion. We find that the Old Testament did fix a proportion, which was an abundant benevolence for a segregated race religion, but yet was a fixed minimum less than which the Israelite could not consecrate to the service of his God without a trespass against his religion. Shall it then be said that the law of the grace of giving found in the New Testament lowers this minimum standard, leaving the Christian to be more earthly and less noble? Is the self-denial, of which the Savior speaks, below

the limit of the Jewish? Then we can lawfully be more selfish than the Jew without reproach. "It is come to this, that our Christianity of love and sacrifice lets down the standard of this special virtue below the point where it stood when she came to warm the world."

The whole social fabric is the test of Christian liberality, and if it could be shown that there is no fixed proportion—a minimum limit —of one's increase imposed by our Lord upon us, *the conditions themselves as they now exist demand a universal law of giving adequate to these conditions.* This proposition needs no argument. The whole system of redemption, is, from first to last, one prodigious process of giving. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," Christ so loved us that "while we were yet sinners he died for us." And we are "to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." One of the oddest things in all argument is that the passage, "the Lord loveth a cheerful giver," is the passage relied upon as a cover for a liberty of giving, which will even withhold any gift because "cheerfulness" could not be present to witness the gift!

The wisdom of God has not thus put his own

institution beyond his power, by committing it to the imperfect wisdom and the limited power of human instruments. Man has that place in the scheme of redemption that makes such a law an absolute necessity, in order that God should control his own affairs. This is beyond question. Then why do we quibble about the word law? What else can we call it? and what is the distinction we would make here? Law but carries with it the thought of, "A rule of being or conduct, a controlling regulation; the mode or order according to which an agent or power acts." And this expresses the very thing that this whole investigation suggests. If we shall at all admit obligations here, it must not only be universal but proportionate, for there are other considerations that can never be answered without it. There are many who feel there is some measure of giving required, but they are in the dark as to what that is. That God has laid upon us other and pressing duties which require our ministry also, involves the settlement with seeming conflicting interests. Then in beginning, having had pressure of habit that knows no economy for such purposes, and having never known a real dependence upon God, it might have been expected that it would be a serious problem. And we are frank

to say that human nature without some guiding law that would fix a relative duty, is not of itself capable of fixing the proportion. Knowing no dependence that could alone lead into a proper trust of a Father's provisional care, they could hardly grow into a grace of this kind without instruction and exercise. The bald statement that "one ought to give," without proper guidance, would be about as apt to educate one in this grace as to say, "A child ought to learn," and make no provision for his schooling. And to push the claims of the gospel, however many and pressing they may be, and yet not recognize this difficulty and seek to remove it, is to expect the impossible.

We are forced to accept the conclusion that the promulgation of the gospel, committed to man, is a far bigger thing than we have ever conceived it, but not more than we are equal to by the grace and law of God. "How shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent?" is the question of the ages, and it has come to us for answering.

Here we have confronted the call of the Church for finance, and the growing demands of missions—the thousand and one calls for money, and we have seen how our best efforts fail to meet what we have already undertaken

as the least we ought to do, and we must conclude that a law is needed. Has that law been given, and what is it? Until all the obligations, assumed and proposed, are met, there is no escape from the conclusion that there is such a law, let it be what it may, and found where it will.

When the clearer and more easily distinguished light of revelation was given God's chosen people after deliverance from bondage and idols, it contained specific laws closely analogous to the above suggestion. They were not permitted to wander without rule or guidance in a moral wilderness, nor were they permitted to enter the promised land until the morale of their life and conduct was forestalled in this regard. They were coming into "a land flowing with milk and honey," and Moses said, "for Jehovah will surely bless thee in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it." Yet he said also, "the poor will never cease out of the land," which was providentially met by the command, "Thou shalt surely open thy hand unto thy brother, to thy needy, and to thy poor in the land," that they should not be in want among their brethren. But even the general prosperity was dependent, not only upon the above injunction, but also

upon the condition, "If only thou diligently hearken unto the voice of Jehovah thy God, to observe all these commandments which I command thee this day."

The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is "the called out" of God's children, and it is among the moral certainties that the general principles involved in the moral nature of man at one time, and recognized and forestalled in the first deliverance, would not be neglected in the last. And the facts indicate that revelation has been the forerunning light that has led us into the land of promise, power and plenty, and it should be among the necessary considerations that we, too, should be safeguarded as they were. Civilization's light is God's word, and the wonderful prosperity and wealth of this nation make imperative some such regulative restrictions as correlated with these things. We cannot be blind to the presence of God in these powers and possibilities, and there is no question but what they bespeak some definite instructions that shall turn them into praise of Him who gave them, and his praiseworthy approval of our use of them. Things that have proven themselves to be such a mighty force for evil, through the weakness of the flesh and the strength of God's law which says, "Thou shalt not covet," certainly

must be looked upon as under law which would obviate this tendency and turn them into a spiritual uplift. If there is no such law we do not reckon right upon God, and are much mistaken as to what we have read in Scripture. As it is a fundamental principle, it underlies all revelation, and is dealt with as axiomatic.

In the childhood of the race it was particularized; it is not now a new commandment but an old one, as found in both old and new Testaments, and whatever the law it is fulfilled in this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," and "that ye love one another." And we shall find some way to unite into a consistent whole these various anomalies and contending principles that we have found in the affairs of religion.

What is the meaning of the wealth of our nation? Is it to be estimated only in figures? The Church is the richest institution on earth, when we consider the possessions and prosperity of her members; but counting her pretensions and work, she is the most beggarly, both in her doing and manner of getting. Why is this? It cannot be because of what she stands for, nor because there is no way to correct it; this would be to deny her divine origin. It cannot be because of the inability of those composing her

members, for the facts utterly refute the insinuation. It cannot be because she will not, for this would be to deny her very existence; we cannot be followers of Jesus Christ and thus deny him, in stiff-necked resistance to his imparted spirit.

These observations not only prove a law needed but indicate it must have been given. We shall proceed to show the correctness of our conclusions, but first, we think it best to consider some of the prevailing notions of what that law is under the dispensation of grace.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT IS THE LAW?

"Every man a law unto himself."

THE many think it is but a principle involved, the direction it shall take and the order and amount being at the discretion of the possessor; that each is "a law unto himself." And the following are the opinions as to the only laws allowable.

"Systematic Giving."—This is the rule of some, and where other things are equal, and were it universal, there could hardly be any complaint. We ought to and we must have system in our religion and benevolences, but system is "the regular method or order, arrangement or plan which one may follow," and if in giving we have no regulating influence, no definite instructions, and recognize no other obligation than we ourselves establish, while it may be systematic, it may be wholly unequal to what is required and to what we are able. What shall be the time and the amount that shall enter into a system? is a question before the system. We could give yearly the sum of five dollars for preaching and only a dollar to any

and all missions of our choosing, and make this the rule of life, and yet be both rich and stingy. With an income of a thousand a year we could be systematic and punctually drop but a nickel a week into the collection basket, and give to each mission call a twenty-five-cent piece. To be systematic, the question of ability and demand need not enter in. Systematic giving is all right *if there is anything in it.*

"Give until you feel it."—One certainly ought, and Jesus' measure of the richest gift he saw cast into the treasury, while standing over against it, was "the widow's mite," for it was all her living. She felt it in more ways than one. But his utopian dream is so changeable and so evanescent in its character that it would not furnish a substantial enough foundation even for an air castle. What with liver-complaint and indigestion, covetousness and greed, it would serve admirably to work upon the feelings, but to fill empty church treasuries, the best of money beggars have shown it to be short measure. Some people are very careful about their feelings, and don't care to have them hurt. Then "there are feelings and feelings," and it would take a wise weather prophet who could forecast the results of feelings in giving. We have already found that a cold,

bleak Sunday, the first of March will decrease the offerings. People have to be careful of their health, and they are afraid of "the grip" on their feelings. Then how many things one's feelings are subject to! One may be deeply moved to buy a ten dollar hat on Saturday and on Sunday to give a dollar to the Lord, but if the hat crowns the head on Sunday the feelings may be there, but not the dollar.

Just to give until we feel it would not mend matters much, for the less we give in proportion to our ability the more we feel it, and we finally come to the point where we see our giving amounts to so little that we *feel* it will do no good, and we get tired of hurting our feelings and quit, for we find this a loophole through which our stinginess is ready enough to shove us. Some have been moved at times to such liberality on account of their feelings towards some worthy benevolence that they have never recovered for a second benefit.

"The cheerful giver."—This man is subject to the same contagious diseases. Two young ladies once sat in church and discussed Bro. Skinflint, who, though very rich, only put a penny into the collection plate. One of them said she supposed that he was giving according to scripture. And when the other wondered if

the comparison was to the widow's mite, the other said, "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver, and Bro. S. wanted to be one of them."

"Proportionate giving."—"Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store as he may prosper." This is fought shy of, for it is getting dangerously near the right solution, and if we would not take away the foundation upon which it rests in both principle and practice, it would remain to shame us in our miserly dealings with the Lord. But we confront the same difficulty we have found in the others. Proportion of what? is the question. Fix the proportion and do you fix the obligation? Is it the proportion of what we have, or what we have left? The question of a living, and other previous considerations will change and alter circumstances so as to make the simple fact of proportion ambiguous. We give oftentimes in proportion to what others give, or what others may expect us to give. We mistake portion for proportion. Then we don't know by what standard to measure our prosperity, and it is not often counted as prosperity when we have paid for something we have long wanted. You see we have neither a limit nor a law here to set the duty and the obligation of

proportion, and we find we are compelled to go search for some foundation that has been laid deep and long, if we expect to build for this grace.

PART III

CHAPTER I.

TITHING CONSIDERED.

"And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is Jehovah's: it is holy unto Jehovah."—Leviticus 27:30.

The system of tithing appears as old as the race. Collyer says: "Now since this proportion of one in ten, is certainly indifferent in itself, as one in seven or one in eight, it is reasonable to suppose that the custom of paying tithes so general among different and distant nations, must have had some divine direction for it, and that it came from Adam to Noah, and from him to all posterity until by dispersion of Babel it spread over all the world."

Grotius says: "From the most ancient ages a tenth has been regarded as the portion due to God, and the evidences of this fact are found in both Greek and Latin histories." The Arabians by law, says Selden in his "History of Tithes," required every merchant to offer a tenth of his frankincense to the priests for their God; that the Phœnicians, following the example of Abraham, devoted a tenth of their spoils of war to holy uses, that it was a custom in Italy to pay and vow tithes to their deities un-

til the latter times of the Empire; that the German Saxons, who mainly peopled England, sacrificed a tenth of all captives to Neptune; and that Cicero once exclaimed, "No man ever vowed Hercules a tenth in hope of increasing his wit."

The Carthagenians practiced it, and misfortune coming on them when their wealth made them forget the duty, they repented and returned to the practice. Didymus of Alexandria, says it was a Grecian custom to consecrate the tenth of their increase to their gods. Xenophon and Cyrus paid tithes to heathen gods.

Pliny says the Ethiopians made trade unlawful without its observance. And the striking words of Montacutius are that "instances are mentioned in history of some nations who do not offer sacrifices; *but in the annals of all times none are found who do not pay tithes.*"

It was certainly practiced very largely before the Mosaic institution, and if it was so without divine command, it is only accounted for as one of the primary notions of humanity, one of innate principle, and let those believe this who may, but it would be the first time to find such a thing of faith without some foundation based upon revelation. But the striking and forcible inference from what is instanced in these cita-

tions from history accords with the words of Collyer above suggested; we cannot account for it without regarding it as of divine origin. Both Jew and Gentile were following it together in time, and no collusion can be imputed.

We come now to note the instances on record in the earlier ages, as contained in the Old Testament. Moses, writing about 1500 B. C., gives the first mention as reaching back yet about 500 years, to Abraham. In Genesis, the 14th chapter, Abraham is mentioned as paying tithes to Melchizedek, priest of God Most High. He gave a tenth of the spoil captured from the four kings that had warred in the vale of Siddim, when Lot had been taken. Abraham would hardly have paid tithes of the spoil unless it had been a recognized principle with himself, which he followed in his own things. He would have been a hypocrite to have done so. He was not acting for others, for he would not then have paid them to Melchizedek; as for himself, he would not take so much as a thread or shoe latchet.

The second mention is found in the 28th chapter of Genesis, where the account is of Jacob's leaving home for fear of Esau. His dream and vision is the turning point in his life. There Jehovah came into his life, and the

promise of tithe marked his repentance and reformation, which we have every reason to believe he kept, for God certainly blessed him in increase. His was a practical repentance. It seems he only then recognized this claim of Jehovah upon him, which he had never given; now he would repent and the tithe he would render.

The manner of stating these two instances gives the inference of a general prevalence of tithing which had evidently been enjoined by Jehovah; a conclusion reaffirmed by contemporaneous history. This is confirmed by examining Leviticus 27:30, where the simple statement is made that "all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, *is* the Lord's." The language is in the present tense, "is," plainly showing it to have been a previously existing and recognized law. Now when we examine more fully the Mosaic institution, we are astounded at the demands made upon the resources of the Jews. We are accustomed to think "a tithe" was their duty, when it is established beyond question they were required to pay two tithes, or one-fifth of their entire income. Some assert, and it cannot be successfully denied, that a third tithe was apportioned, if not yearly, at least every third

year. Besides, the first fruits set aside for the Lord's service are estimated by Jewish writers at one-sixtieth of the entire products of the fields and flocks. (Ex. 23:19.) There was also the redemption money of the first born (Numbers 18:15-18), the half shekel tax (Ex. 30:11-15), and the large number of animals required for the temple service. Alexander Campbell says of this matter: "I have been calculating the amount of property necessary to the support of the Jewish religion, and have elaborated this result: that one-half of the time and money, a full moiety of the whole resources of the nation was exacted." And this agrees with many other writers, who have reached the same conclusion.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHES.

"For if that which passeth away was with glory, much more that which remaineth is in glory."—2 Cor. 3:11.

THE grace of giving is one that comes slowly, and God has always recognized this principle, and led his people slowly; but ever upward. All history testifies to the minimum of one-tenth, and it seems to be the foundation upon which liberality has been built. We see the Jews were brought up to liberal giving, reaching one-half, and it ought to be no surprise if the New Testament shows a cumulative evidence in its favor, but rather should we be surprised if it did not. If one would answer this question by an honest, logical inference from that book, any thought of anything less than a tenth is out of the question, for he will contemplate a style of giving for which less than a tenth, in even the poorest poverty, would be a repudiation of faith itself, and to reach which but a few choice spirits in our day are attempting. They would be surrounded by an atmosphere of fervid joy and love, the deeds of which are "every good work," "distributing," "communicating,"

"making sacrifices with which God is well pleased;" then they would find examples of liberality sanctioned up to the "half of his goods," as in the case of Zaccheus; and in a poor widow up to "all her living;" in the Apostles "forsaking all," individuals "selling all," the deeply poor in the depths of poverty, giving to the more poor, out of "a great trial of afflictions," abounding in riches of "liberality," giving, yea, "beyond their power," and to crown the whole, the Master giving always, and storing never, and then giving himself a ransom for all. And though these examples are never enforced, they are never reproved, but commended. They are set forth as worthy of emulation, and what they have done, "wherever this gospel has been preached," has stood as monuments to liberality, before which the pleadings of self-seeking and covetous greed must slink away into darkness, where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

But the weakness of the human heart that is not sanctified in the grace of our Lord to know the blessedness of giving above receiving, would invoke the law of love to save the pocketbook. There is a defense offered against any definite law, which says, "The law is love." But this does not come from those who are troubled with

over-giving, for the objection is against a law of minimum duty—that would prevent the rule of selfishness. They think the law of love is flexible and perforated on the under side. The objectors and their defense are not consistent, for *law* sets bounds, and love, of all laws, is the most exacting. Love is least selfish, "seeking not its own." It can never feel, never do, never give enough. To-morrow it will do what to-day seems impossible. *The law of love!* It is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." Would they invoke this law?

Then to the law and to the testimony. The New Testament must yield something specific, and there are those who would be free, but need the stroke of revelation's "Thus saith the Lord" to strike the manacles of selfishness from their souls. It is an open question with many, even students of the word, whether the tithing law is in force under the Christian dispensation. From right and wrong motives they have thought it one of the things "which neither they nor their fathers could bear." We can well understand the misunderstanding on this point, for we once never gave it any concern, and after we came to look into the matter we only did it because we felt that at least this

was required, but not as compulsory, and so practiced it for a few years before we came to see it as a duty, but now we find sufficient warrant in the New Testament to make it binding upon the church to-day, and for this reason are writing this work to prove it. Whether our grounds are well taken, you, dear reader, must judge by the evidence we have set forth.

The New Testament is a book of principles and advances upon the Old Testament as from negation to positiveness; from "Thou shalt not" to "This do and thou shalt live." When a matter like the question before us is to be settled the moral force of the subject is for consideration; and if we can't find "thou shalt tithe all thy income" in the New Testament, shall we say the question cannot be proven? The eminent Christian statesman, W. E. Gladstone, says, "To constitute a moral obligation it is not necessary that we have a positive command. Probable evidence is binding as well as demonstrative evidence; nay, it constitutes the greatest portion of the subject matter of duty. And, therefore, a dim view of religious truth entails an obligation to follow it, as real and valid as that which results from a clear and full comprehension." If it could not be established that a positive command for tithing is to be

found in the New Testament, certainly there must be some evidence adduced, more than is forthcoming, to invalidate the claim made for its obligatoriness. And with this said we wish to examine this book for confirmation of the view presented. In view of the fact that there is no hint or logical inference in this book that the tithe was abolished by Christ's death, "for Christ came not to diminish our obligations but to increase them," it remains to be shown why it is not yet in force. The tribe of Levi was thus supported, and if you couple the "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel," with "The laborer is worthy of his hire," you must show that the tithe is more than equal to these, and that whatever that is, is forthcoming. There is no minimum limit until the claims of the gospel are met. If it can be shown that one tithe impoverished the Jew, then it must be classed as one of the things "which neither they nor our fathers could bear," and that this was one of the things that Peter referred to. Until this is done it must stand. If it can be shown that the Christian can live on nine-tenths of his income, and as much more as he pleases to use, and yet not be guilty of selfishness and covetousness, even to the rejection of all claims of the gospel until he "feels like it," then it will

be time enough to say the tithe is not in force. If it can be shown that the Christian can bring what is left, and the meanest, out of his prosperity, and yet be more acceptable to God than the Jew, that by law made only the first of the field and flock, and without blemish, acceptable, then it will be time enough to believe the tithe is abolished. Where does "seeking first the kingdom, and his righteousness" commence? Can God be first, yet come in as last considered? Why, it is not *a* proportion nor *any* proportion that is denied, but the principle involved. The tithe was first taken. Now suppose you do not consider this amount a duty. Take, then, any amount; when will you make the reckoning? Will you wait until all other claims are settled? If you could conscientiously consider this question only—that it shall come first—you could not fail to see what is involved. Take what is generally considered as the only law for the Christian: "Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store as he may prosper," and conscientiously live up to it, and the law of a tenth will not trouble you, nor will you want to dig under it. You can see that though there is no fixed scale of proportion given in this passage, yet if you seek the answer from the New Testament, everything

seems to push up the scale to a proportion from which nearly all shrink away.

But the myopia of the selfish soul needs the concave lens of truth fixed close to the eye to let in the rays of this light; so we turn to the passages that specifically speak of this matter. Our Lord always sanctioned the law of tithing, saying, "This ye ought to have done," but his sanction or reinforcement of the law while he is in the flesh cannot, in itself, be taken as evidence fixing this obligation upon us, for he was "a minister of the circumcision," and his earthly ministry was confined to the Jews. His disciples were not to go into "any way of the Gentiles." And advocates of tithing have made this mistake. The Lord also supported Sabbath keeping and showed its obligation, but this does not bind the Sabbath upon us, and yet there are many who advocate tithing, that say "it is as binding as the Sabbath," while the Jewish Sabbath is not binding at all. If the principle involved—that a day of rest is necessary to soul and body—finds expression in the Lord's day, as possessing the moral significance that conditions demand, the same argument imposes the tithe also. The gospels really give us nothing more than we have inferred. In fact, only in the letter to the Hebrews, where

the matter is specifically mentioned, and occurring when the new Dispensation was in force, can we find anything that borders on the need of some who demand a "thus saith the Lord." And to this we next devote our attention.

We might grant the intention of the writer of the Hebrew letter to be wholly different from the purpose for which we quote the passage, but the mention of the matter would not have its present force if a logical inference cannot be drawn from it in support of the claim we are making, and there is nothing in all the New Testament to contradict this inference. The Christian dispensation began with the Jews as the first converts, and this letter is written to Hebrews, with whom the question of tithing was well understood. It is unreasonable to suppose that a Hebrew in passing from Judaism into the more glorious reign of the Messiah's kingdom, would think the "rendering unto God the things that were his" meant giving him glory by lessening his offerings, or making these less obligatory. Now the reasoning of the writer of Hebrews to show the greatness of Christ's priesthood, in this instance, fastens, not alone upon the character of the priesthood of Melchizedek, but upon Abraham's recognition of the same in the payment of the tithe. As Melchi-

zedek received his office from God without reference to his genealogy or the law of a carnal commandment, this being unchangeable, so Christ received his office without a change of law, or being of the tribe of Levi; he passes to Abraham's payment of the tithe as a significant fact in the argument. Christ is a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Abraham is a representative of the race, yet pays tithes to Melchizedek. The Levitical is honored also with the tithe, then why not he who reigns as priest and king? Where would the force of the argument have been with a Hebrew, if the tithe had been abrogated with the coming of Christ? The argument in the payment of the tithe is, that it was in existence before the law, but if there is exemption from this, as is now claimed, and the new dispensation is better for no regulation here, it would have been timely for the writer to have mentioned the fact of spiritual sacrifices being the only necessity and obligation.

The glory of Christ's eternal priesthood is its unchangeableness; this is from God, but man's recognition of this glory comes in the honor he can bestow through the things in which he can minister. The law of a carnal commandment renewed and imposed a beautiful and expressive recognition of the Levitical

priesthood, and "how shall not the ministration of the spirit be with (at least equal) glory? For if the ministration of condemnation hath glory, much rather doth the ministration of righteousness *exceed* in glory, for verily that which hath been made glorious hath not been made glorious in this respect, by reason of the glory which surpasseth."

Jesus, sitting on the steps of the temple court, watching the multitude paying their vows and offerings, was watching an impressive spectacle. This temple for God's praise and service was to pass away, to be succeeded by the temple of his body. Now it is not Jesus, but Jesus the Christ who has been and is now a silent observer of the offerings put into the treasury. We sometimes forget that he is interested in the treasury. We have formed the impression that he is never interested in anything save what we term spiritual work. If it had no relation to spiritual growth this would be the right view, but all other religions that reach not a degree of mercy's dispensation that is to be found in the multitudinous eleemosynary institutions of Christianity, nor need missionary proclamation, are yet bound to the systematic sustaining of their religions. *Why should Christianity omit this obligation?.* Ma-

homet commands the tithe. Buddhism inculcates and practices tithing. Mormonism rigidly enforces and systematically pays the tithe and flourishes. Seventh Day Adventism is strong in its strength, while even the stupendous fraud of Dowieism is growing rich by its observance. But the orthodox religions would need to tear down their steeples and strip their temples of adornment to pay their honest religious obligations, while for numbers and wealth their missionary efforts are but child's play in comparison. Our barns are filled with plenty and our presses burst out with new wine, and yet we have not honored God with our substance nor with the first fruits of our increase. What does our Lord think of us as he beholds our prosperity and its opportunities for a rich liberality, and yet sees us counting all things else as of first moment and value?

CHAPTER III.

THE EARLY CHURCH.

"And the disciples, *every man according to his ability, determined* to send relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judea."—Acts 11:29.

We are constrained to think the early Christians, the Gentile converts as well as the Jewish, observed the law of tithing as a debt, and that all mention of gifts and offerings was with the presumptive evidence that this was so understood. We cannot see how this would be otherwise. This had been the custom of the Hebrews as a religious rite, it was observed by the surrounding nations, and viewing the fact that the whole of the New Testament teaching inculcates an unprecedented manner of giving, it stands inviolable against contradictory but illogical inference. If it be asked, "Why do we find so little mention made of this matter in the New Testament?" we would answer that the environment of that day made it so easily a duty, as then in force, that it is only the *present day indifference* to the law of this obligation that makes it difficult for us to see this, and has necessitated a denial of its force. The trouble is

at this end more than back there. It was no doubt as fully practiced as it was under the Mosaic order, but was so naturally an obligation that it was accepted and met as all other debts were. It was understood under both dispensations that man ought to pay his debts, and this was one of them.

We refer the thoughtful reader to the fact that according to Origen, Jerome and Chrysostom, the early Christian church taught and practiced tithing. Bingham in his "Christian Antiquities" says, "This is the unanimous judgment of the Fathers and the voice of the church *uncontradicted* for more than a thousand years." Many of the Fathers thought it binding, and councils from the fourth to the fifteenth centuries, to the number of ten, enjoined it, resting the duty, not upon the authority of the ecclesiastial law, but upon the word of God.

The plan or system that Paul gives in the 16th chapter of First Corinthians, that is taken as the criterion for us, but which is abused in both interpretation and in practice, does not preclude the idea of tithing being an underlying groundwork for pressing the claims of this benevolent work for the poor in Judea. And if any judgment is to be formed at all, it is rather that the law was still in force. Try this plan

to-day, and see if there will not need to be "a collection" taken when you go. Is it supposed this was the only work of benevolence then being done? The same writer in writing to the church at Ephesus, and speaking of a thief's reformation, gives the keynote of church benevolence as it was then understood, when he says, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, *that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need.*" The people before whom we can press the claims of such a benevolence, and ask that it be done in the manner the apostle describes, are the people who have been accustomed to "lay aside as they may prosper." We would make the whole matter to rest in the absence of a "grudging necessity" and to consist in the presence of a "cheerfulness," whereas we lose sight of the fact it was a "bounty" in which the apostle might be thought to be too self-interested; to guard against which he was careful that others were appointed by the churches with him in "the matter of this grace." The fact is overlooked that *they abounded unto the riches of liberality*. It can be seen that not alone has the church thus sought to break the heads of those who should fill *the office of liberality* by destroying

the foundation upon which this grace might stand in dutiful stewardship in the Lord's prospering, but has opened the way for a selfishness that is "earthly, sensual, devilish."

Some think that the church at Jerusalem began with a socialistic and communistic fervor in benevolence that has since passed away, and is not practicable now. This is based upon two unfounded assumptions: First, that the church disposed of all their earthly possessions, and, second, that they did this because they thought the second coming of Christ was at hand. There is no foundation for either, and these are theories that are hurtful in the extreme. It must be remembered that the church was being guided into all the truth by the Holy Spirit, and only those who deny that the apostles were thus led, can accept this. The Holy Spirit cannot certainly have left them to such false ideas. And to have left them to the dispossession of all their earthly store would have been an error from which the rebound would have been disastrous to every charity in which the church was to engage in Christly ministrations.

The appointment of "the seven" to care for the neglected widows of the Hellenistic Jews, is rather a damper upon this theory of a community of goods. Though "not one of them said

that aught of the things which he possessed was his own * * * and neither was there any among them that lacked," it was because distribution was made to each, "*according as any had need.*" It was not a uniform distribution of goods, nor is it reasonable to infer that *every one* among them parted with *all* his goods. That "as many as had houses and lands," means that every one sold their houses, etc., is without reason. To believe this is to infer they were fanatical and their enthusiasm overstepped the bounds of common sense. Their religion was not for a day, and there is no need of theorizing about socialistic rules governing this body in a mistaken benevolence that it was found afterwards necessary to correct by acting more rationally, but it was the sober, yet spontaneous expression of the love of God and man that had taken possession of their hearts. What they did would be perfectly right and rational for the church to do to-day, and what she would do if she were to submit to the Spirit's guiding in the stewardship that is committed to her. The Mosaic institution made ample provision for the unfortunate class, and the new dispensation was an awakening among the Jews to their neglected duty in genuine benevolence.

A realization of the true purposes of possessions took hold of these converts that made them see unlike we see this matter to-day, and as long as the "need of any" was manifest, no man counted anything his own until that need was met. We see what an awakened conscience will do after some definite law has fixed an obligation.

Pass to the record in the eleventh chapter of Acts of Apostles and we will see how this matter was understood. When the "famine to be over the whole world" was made known by Agabus, through the Spirit, prompt action was taken. The same spirit of benevolence was manifested as was first seen in Jerusalem. If the former had been an outburst of fanatical communism, the result would have been a caution here to act more slowly. The church in its infancy needed as badly as we do to-day to know the grace of giving. Giving will always be an essential part of the Christian religion, and what is most needed in the church to-day is to return to the spirit of the early church. Theirs was a beginning, but when such is their record, what would not be the measure of our giving if we had the spirit with our present properties and opportunities!

Has our Lord put his own institution at the

mercy of the mind of the flesh, so in opposition to the mind of the spirit? There is a knowledge we need here that is mediate. The instances of genuine liberality are too sporadic to indicate any ordained law to be in operation, whether of the tithe or according to prosperity, and it must be that something has intervened to nullify its operation, and not that there is no such law.

The Lord has ordained that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel. To ordain a thing is to legislate, or decree that thing to be. And when our Lord ordained this thing, he meant more than that they who preached had the right to be supported, but that the support was decreed to come from those who received the gospel, and this rested as a debt upon them. This is true also, *that every duty the gospel imposes is a debt.* This was true in the case of the Apostle and the Corinthian church, and is also a universal obligation. If things spiritual have been sowed unto us, is it a great matter that the sower should reap our carnal things? To what could the ordaining refer if not to some regulative principle for our living?

CHAPTER IV

THE LAW IN ITS RELATION TO THE SPIRITUAL.

"For the upright there are no laws."

It is inconceivable that any law of God would be given that is destitute of moral significance, especially one that dealt with temporality by which man lived. "*God never establishes arbitrary institutions nor promulgates arbitrary laws*" in nature or morals. When Jehovah sanctioned the system of tithing for the Jewish nation, he did not *then* institute it, but recognized it, and as a principle of life and not merely for national ends. It contained the essence of his goodness and kindness to all concerned. As his chosen people journeyed to "a land flowing with milk and honey," they were coming into conditions that especially required the enforcement of such a law. The law did not create any duties, it defined them. In slavery, without the temple and its worship of sacrifice and offering, the people had forgotten and Jehovah did not enforce the law, but as these conditions are changed, the law becomes a necessary adjunct. As long as these

conditions remain, and are augmented by others more pressing, the law is inviolable.

A careful examination of the facts will clearly show the relation this law sustained to the spiritual development and welfare of the Israelites. When they neglected this law they were in alienation; when they respected it they were in favor. The nation became the grandest and richest of earth, and if any inference can be drawn, it is that the obedience to God's commands in this, gave them this glory. Tithes and offerings were observed faithfully in these conditions, and as long as they held to them the bounty of God was poured out; when they withheld them the windows of heaven were closed. Hear the prophet Malachi: "For from the days of your fathers ye have turned aside from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of Hosts. But ye say, wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye rob me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye rob me, even this whole nation. Bring ye the tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and prove me herewith, saith Jehovah of Hosts, if I will

not open you the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

The connection is too close not to enable us to see the spiritual significance of the law of tithing. But some will answer, "That was true with the Israelites, for it dealt with the childhood of the race, but is not necessary now, under the Christian dispensation." Why think this? If it was the childhood of man, it was for schooling him, but into what? If they could stand this as children, and it was made necessary by their religion, what ought to be our strength in the manhood of Christ and the larger duty of preaching to all the world? "But they would not give without it." Do we do as much without it? Statistics show that *Protestantism falls fifty millions short of tithing.*

"Could law make our giving acceptable?" Anything that is less than the law of proportionate ability is not acceptable, and why not law make our giving acceptable if it raise it to our duty? Does obedience to the letter of the law in baptism make it acceptable? No one questions but what a wise and gracious use could be made of the tithe, and no one who knows questions that the church does not give

this much, hardly the minority of her supporters reach it. But this is a consideration that never seems to be thought of. The question will ever come back to the conditions under the Mosaic dispensation, and to those previous as well. The last, with but a little ray of heaven's light, followed it, and the Israelites did it in obedience to law. What then? The need of this proportion is more pressing to-day, and if we are under a law of grace, is there anywhere a suggestion of its rule in our lives, when we can care nothing for meeting the conditions? If we say we cannot afford it, we are begging the question. We know our prosperity, and how much superior is our real wealth. God did not deal arbitrarily with Jacob. But as the demands are with us in the world's great need, who is to minister to this need?

Right here is the trouble. For without any hint of a law in revelation, we face conditions that declare a necessity and arbitrarily establish our duty—a fixed obligation until we "owe no man anything." Less than a tithe will not do it.

One of the commandments is "Thou shalt not covet." The Apostle Paul says he would not have known coveting without this law. Is there nothing under the dispensation of grace

to help us avoid this sin, by fixing some measure of duty? If there is merit in obedience to a negative command, reason would suggest, a positive ordinance would have some virtue. The fact is, the very things the church herself proposes, and the debt she incurs, rest lightly upon her, whereas tithing would leave no such thing possible, but would rather create conditions that would pave the way for unprecedented activity she has never dreamed of. But the call has always had to come from the outside, and this objectiveness is not as loud as subjective selfishness. But reverse the system and you reverse the conditions. Objections to this question cannot come from its being a law, nor that a tenth, and even more, is too large a proportion, but only from within us—that is either a selfishness that *hath not*, or a lack of dependence and trust in our heavenly Father. God could not ask more of an Israelite than of a Christian, and not be a respecter of persons. Our prosperity and the world's need dispute any excusable reason for saying the objective is less pressing, and these are the only two reasons or objections we can offer.

The chief objection that seems to be offered against the tithing system, is that it is restrictive, so much so as to make giving lose the

grace of cheerfulness. But this can have no force save against a fixed arithmetical division, and not to a law of proportion as such. But there is a necessary law of "as he may prosper," which is a proportionate law and is restrictive, even arithmetical. It only becomes a question of what is the restrictive duty, what the arithmetical proportion. Is the restriction only next to nothing, resting upon the bottom-self? Did we name a tenth as the high standard of Christian benevolence, and confine ourselves to it, this objection might be offered, but when we name it only as the lowest point at which any footing can be found, and leave all above as free, the arrow flies below us, for it is then seen why the objection is offered. "No man feels the restraint of law so long as he remains within the sphere of his liberty—a sphere, by the way, always large enough for the full exercise of his powers." And where is the liberty that is granted to us in the spirit of Christ, without which no man is his, that feels the restraint of this as a minimum law? The complaint is not consistent, for the restriction is a safeguard in which we ought to rejoice because it guards our liberty, not interferes with it. It stands between us and the covetous who

invade the precincts of church privileges at the cost of our liberty. There can be no condition, where the perfect liberty we plead for exists, without an obedience to this law so glad and so entire that its restraints are unfelt. It would equalize the burden, where some now have to carry it all. Were this law protecting our liberty, that which we now give that goes to make up the deficiency of others, might become a bounty for other work which we now see no way of providing for.

Jehovah did not then need, nor does he now, any portion of our substance; neither does he need any observance of this duty upon our part to care for his own creation, that he is thus shut up to this means; but the exaction comes of our need, and is the reason for its enactment.

"Will a man rob God?" Can a man rob God? Yes, and yes. And it has always been that the first departure from God is marked by withholding the first fruits of the increase that gives praise to his name. In this we first turn aside from his ordinances, and if we will return unto God we must rob him no longer. Jacob repented and promised the tithe. The prophet Malachi sounds the clarion call to repentance, but first denounces the departure in

this matter as robbing God. We have paid tribute to Cæsar—the government, but have not rendered unto God the things that are God's, if we have denied this. The tithes and offerings are God's.

It is such a law that would become a bulwark of our liberty; and it would be so because it first marks our recognition of a necessary duty. We are not to gather from this that tithing is the limit of liberality for the Christian, it is only *liberation* that leads to *liberality*. It is a debt we owe, and we are to "owe no man anything." Until we come under its obligations we can never know our privileges—the debt "save to love one another." It is a recognition of a relationship on the lines of which will flow out genuine humility, piety, and good works. Like repentance, and part of it, it is a preparation for baptism. It becomes the seal to our relationship with God the Father and man our brother. Constantly it stands the memorial to "seek first the kingdom of God." No other duty is so vitally intertwined with the sacredness of labor. God's fatherly care can in no other way be so demonstrated as in the trust we thus repose in Him. "It links our hope of personal comfort with the Father of all benevolence." The public

assembly for preaching, the study of God's word, or the prayer meeting, is never so near, nor so closely ties us to heaven as this does. Really these others will never be to us what they might without this last. "Nor is it unnatural, for the man who prayerfully devotes a tenth of his income to God will learn how to conserve, and invest, and save, and expend his other nine-tenths; he will be held to his other Christian vows as he is true to his financial obligations; and economy, honesty, sobriety and caution will all contribute prosperity, and make it possible for God to trust such a man with large resources."

It is liberality we want; then we are after some fixed purpose that will enable us to attain to it. We must be just before we are generous, and a guiding principle we need to lead us there. The grace of God in our hearts needs to be cultivated, and tithing affords the opportunity, for it is a God-given law. It is the law that will afford real opportunities for liberality, for it will meet all necessities, that liberality might have an opportunity to be truly manifested. It would teach us as no other duty could, how easily we could come into the real grace of giving. "It is the natural result, that one who will year after year carefully set apart

a fixed proportion for the service of his God, will become habituated to feel that he is neither the author nor the owner of any fraction of property, but merely a steward. And whoever thus begins life by keeping this law of proportion is most likely of all to advance upon it as his gracious Father augments his prosperity." No one who has ever adopted it, but what would voice this statement, and when a far smaller per cent was a burden, this became a joy, and in cases where the windows of heaven had not yet been opened to pour out more than they could contain. The testimony of all those who have adopted this gracious decree, is that they feel themselves to have become capitalists, dealing in heaven's bounty, for they have found a fund growing on their hands that calls for investment, and they have become a strange people who look up the treasurers of the churches to pay their portion and increase the same, while never a call comes but what they have something with which to meet it.

We have said that the tithe is not the maximum limit of law or love, but the minimum duty. It is the exercise drill of conscience and heart that makes possible large hearted and joyous liberality. To feel its force is to come within the bounds of a system which would

develop the life until it would become incorporated with it. Without obedience to this law we could not come into the grace of an unspeakable gift for which to thank God, and without which restraints would not be felt, for a religion that does not check our selfishness could not come from a God of love. Such a law divinely wise and imposed, which makes such things possible, will appeal to every true child of God, and will be joyously embraced as a call to liberty perfecting Christian graces.

CHAPTER V.

"It is acceptable according as a man hath, not according as he hath not."—2 Corinthians 8:12.

THE Apostle Paul strikes the keynote of acceptable giving in his second Corinthian letter, in the passage given above. He was writing of just such a matter—this objective grace—the gift given by the churches in Achaia and Macedonia to the suffering brethren in Judea. And in his exhortation he speaks of what is acceptable giving. It is "according as a man hath, not according as he hath not." It might appear upon first reading this passage, that the latter clause is a reference to that condition in which one actually has nothing to give, but this is surely not what was in the mind of the writer. Such a condition was possible then, as it is now, but the intelligence of his hearers was not in question, and by inspiration he would not write such a thing, for who does not know that inability excuses? But he had seen their readiness to promise, now he was guarding against their failure, in which he would be put to shame in his confidence. They had in the beginning already begun to do, but they had willed to do more; now he would that they *complete* the do-

ing. As they were ready "to will, so there might be the completion also out of their ability;" and it is this, according to their ability, that alone could make it acceptable. The measure of acceptableness was that of ability, not inability. The whole eighth chapter is dealing with a wondrous spirit of liberality. The churches of Macedonia were set before the Corinthian church as worthy of emulation. "Affliction" and "deep poverty" were overmatched by "joy that abounded unto rich liberality." "Beyond their power they gave" and "of their own accord." They were found "beseeching" the Apostle and his companions "with much intreaty in regard of this grace and the fellowship in the ministering to the saints." Now the Apostle was not writing to the Corinthian church seeking to have them do, or expecting them to do, *as they had not.* He seemed to think there was sufficient ability to complete the doing also. He was not after distressing them that others might be eased.

The same thought precisely is used by our Lord in the parable of the talents. "To him that hath more shall be given, but from him that hath not even that which he hath shall be taken away." Here we have it! "for it is acceptable according as a man hath, not accord-

ing as he hath not." The question of acceptable giving is involved in the proportion of one's having. There would be some, no doubt, who would give, and their giving would help the cause, but it would not be acceptable in the sight of God, because it would be a *hath not* gift. It would not be what they ought to give.

How many hath-not givers there are! They *have not* much interest; they *have not* much purpose; they *have not* much time; they *have not* much love; and yet they *have very much* for themselves. What is it in man that will make him do, in any measure, when he *hath not?* And why, when he knows it is not acceptable? There is a notable instance of this recorded in Acts of Apostles. Ananias and Sapphira were moved to an act of benevolence by two unholy motives—a benevolence in which they had no interest. They wished to have the praise of men for giving the proceeds of a possession, but they were mercenary enough to keep back part of the price. It was not according to ability, nor prompted by love, but of vanity and miserliness. And yet it is the working of the law in weak humanity, that finds an attempt in obedience to escape self-condemnation. Objective and subjective motives move men in this, and it becomes a snare of the soul. It is evident

the Holy Spirit was guiding these early believers in a holy consecration of property and proceeds to the divine cause of their faith; not a disposal of all their possessions that left them homeless and penniless, having neither shelter for the body and pursuit of faculties; but such self-denial as was quickened into life again by dispossession of unnecessaries and hoarded wealth. These two covetous persons were not ready for this self-abnegation, and yet they would appear so. The unmistakable guidance of the Holy Spirit they could not avoid nor deny, and yet they would have the semblance of obedience, if a lie to God and man could give it. Hypocrisy finds its greatest opportunity in the use and disposition of our earthly possessions, and they play an immeasurable part in the whole religious life. In the instance before us, the Apostle seemed to think the Corinthian brethren so understood this as to need no commandment from him; anyway, it would not make anything acceptable from those who *had not*. The "earnestness of others" was sufficient to prove the "sincerity of their love." The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, through which they were made rich, would offer the inspiration of both means and purpose for this grace; and the "law of Christ" they were to fulfill in

bearing one another's burdens, would comprehend "the wants of the saints" and "abound through many thanksgivings unto God."

What is it that confronts us to-day? Sum up the efforts of the present and prevalent systems of both the church and the individual. See their wasteful, sinful, deteriorating effects. See the grinding and gritting movements of the financial machinery of every benevolence. Confront and confess the real state of affairs as indubitable facts, and then turn your eyes upon the vast wealth of this nation, and ask if there is any possibility of acceptableness, if it is to be measured "according as a man hath."

Look at our prosperity. This nation spends $1,200,000,000 for drink. Our tobacco costs us $25,000,000 more than our bread. We spend for boots and shoes $335,000,000, and $225,000,000 for sugar and molasses, which does not keep every one sweet. While the corsets of civilization (?) cost twice what we give to world-wide missions.

Coming immediately home, let us look at the wealth of our own people. It is estimated that we add to our wealth, after all living expenses have been paid, the enormous sum of $38,000,000 annually, which shows we are not poor but prosperous. What we spent last year for all

religious purposes, $6,193,967, was not quite twice the tithe of our added wealth. But as the tithe is taken out of all that goes for living expenses, we could estimate the tithe of our income to be over $25,000,000.

Do we say that this would be too much? Then let us make a comparison that will humiliate us. The Congregationalists, who number only a little more than half our members, gave to Foreign Missions $845,105, while we gave but $178,323 for the same work. Theirs was $1 per capita, ours but 17c. We have about 6,000 members in foreign fields who gave $30,000, or about $5 per member; nearly thirty times what we gave per member. Fifty thousand Congregationalists in foreign lands gave $167,512, or but little less than what a million and a quarter of Disciples gave, who live in this rich and prosperous country. Our combined missionary efforts fall short of what the Congregationalists do for Foreign Missions alone by $220,000. Think of it! And these are not tithers; if they would tithe, these figures would seem small in the extreme.

The late lamented A. M. Atkinson said: "There is no peril to which men are exposed, and against which they are so carefully guard-

ed and solemnly warned, as that involved in the accumulation and possession of wealth."

The Christian's measure of wealth is not the standard by which the wealth of the world is measured. The Christian's wealth is found on the other side in the secure bank of heaven, and the deposits are not counted as wealth by the world, and prevents the Christian from ever being rich in the eyes of the world. "As a man hath," as another, not inspired, has said, "is what he has left when his gift has been offered." The least that we can have, if it be not productive wealth, indicates the larger store to be where friends have been made to receive us into the eternal tabernacles. To the fruitful branch we go, for it is there the rich store of fruit is found, but the season over, the branch is bare; none has been left to spoil or waste. The wealth of a nation is not hoarded but productive wealth; the wealth of the church is the same, save that with the church its riches are measured by the uses to which they are put, "doing good, distributed, laid up as a good foundation in time to come, built upon life which is life indeed." The foolish-rich lay up for themselves, and are not rich toward God.

The Lord understands us better than we ourselves do, and aside from warning against laying

up for self, he has given directions as to the disposition of our property. The scriptures teem with motives for good deeds that strip us of "the weight and sin which doth so easily beset us."

We have added an exposition of the parable of the vine which we think makes this clear. This parable represents the believer as the branch, Jesus as the vine, and the Father as the husbandman. We shall pass over the necessity of abiding in the vine to bear fruit, and even the question of not bearing fruit, as requiring the branch to be cut out, for these are self-evident. The point of the illustration is found in the manner of treating the fruitful branch. Every branch *in the vine* bears fruit, but conditions arise in which there is need of cleansing the branch that it may bear more fruit, and that fruit bearing may *at all* continue. "Soft rain and genial sunshine are the largest experience of the vine," and even the pruning is gentle, oftentimes, compared with the barrenness that may be. But the pruning time comes, and comes in a time and a way when the treatment has most to do with the vine itself, seemingly harsh and unreasonable. The bramble flourishes and luxuriates without touch of the knife, but the poor vine is cut down to the bare stems

and stubs; but the season comes when fruit and foliage luxuriantly load the one, and death and ashes mark the place of the other. No other thing that produces fruit could have served the purpose of illustrating the relation of fruit-bearing to the care attendant with that result. There is first the vital union with him as the source of life, then, true to the nature of the union, there is produce, or fruit. Year by year, however, marks an increase in the bearing, but this comes by reason of the husbandman's care of the branch; it is cleansed, purged. This means all the care necessary to develop the fruitfulness of the branch, freeing it from excrescenses and useless shoots which are a drain on the branch for nothing.

In the vine of nature its pruning is always to the uninitiated a matter of wonder and surprise. They think the work but a process of destruction, and that if life be left at all, years must pass before any fruit will come, to say nothing of any abundance. But were not this pruning done the vine would finally go to wood and leaves, the fruit would lessen in quantity and quality, to die soon, or be destroyed as useless. But by this process the ratio of increase, is fruit, more fruit, much fruit; without it the cutting

comes nevertheless, but only for removal and burning.

Now applying this figure to ourselves, we see its aptness to the inquiry. By nature man is productive, and by the new birth he is none the less so, but his "much fruit" is to "glorify his father." The son he chastens; the branch he cleanses. The husbandman then cleanses the branch, for as the tendency, without care, is that the vine go more to wood and foliage than to fruit, so it is with us. We would flourish as the green tree, we would be barren with the deception of foliage, like the fig tree which our Lord cursed. As the branch needs itself cut away that fruit may come, so we need that self should be pruned until we bear *much fruit*, wherein our father is glorified. The religion of our Lord grants us in temporalities a larger experience in a richer abundance than it demands of us in return. Should we turn upon him in such an ungrateful spirit as we do, when as a gracious husbandman he would come to prune us? The means he employs to promote our fertility sometimes seems so like that which he employs to punish the wicked, that we are perplexed—like the cutting of the branch, the fruitful and the unfruitful, but the one is pruned for cleansing, the other cut for burning. "What

a mercy it is to the believer that it is pruning with him and not cutting off!" Should not our faith reach beyond self to wait patiently until the sap shall again flow from the vine through us until growth and fruit vindicate the husbandman's tender care? Wonderment upon wonderment to note the abundant barrenness of our service and the tenderness of our father's pruning! It seems he is waiting so patiently for us, neither has he cut off from us a wonderful income of increase, nor cut us off from his love; he is waiting for the returns, but the day will come when the pruning having proven fruitless, the cutting will come and the barren branch will be cast into the burning. "God forbid!"

CHAPTER VI.

SOME PRACTICAL QUESTIONS.

"Virtue consists in action."

As the majority of those who will read this book have never understood the tithing system to be what we claim—the scriptural foundation for Christian liberality—and more likely, still, have never practiced it, like all other beginners they will need, at least, a few directions. And we have thought it wise to append a few practical questions and answers to make the subject as clear as possible.

"What is the tithe?" A tenth.

"Of what should I pay a tithe?" Of all you earn, or the net proceeds of your income.

"What do you consider the net income?" If you work for a salary, it is the full amount of what you receive. If for wages, per day, or week, or month, it is the same less the cost of tools or other paraphernalia you may have to furnish yourself with which to do your work, but not clothing, such as overalls, gloves, etc., in which you work. If a merchant, it is the net proceeds after help, insurance, rent, etc., are

paid. If you are a dealer in the necessities of life, the cash value of those things used for yourself or family are to be tithed. If a farmer, the same holds good as above, help, implements (not horses, buggies, etc., for family use), and the like are to be deducted, but the cash value of all the family consumes, the products sold, bartered or exchanged, should be tithed. Land held for speculation, the taxes upon the same, are to be tithed. When lands, stock, produce, increase in value, take account when sold, or any part sold. All trades and professions the same. Books, office rent, tools, instruments, traveling expenses, or whatever is needed to do your work, is to be deducted from the amounts received, then the tithe paid. But whatever is spent for comfort, convenience, necessaries—food, clothing, rent, pleasure, health, schooling or the like; these are tithable. Your capital, whether money, property, brains, hands, or all these, is that from which you receive income and are not to be tithed, only the income.

"When should I begin?" As soon as you see this to be your duty.

"Suppose I am in debt, what is my duty?" To pay the tithe; for who got you into debt? Is this debt to be denied because you owe other debts? You would have to pay interest on

money borrowed whether you owed other debts or not. If this were a reason for release from this duty, where would it lead? you would only have to keep in debt to escape your duty, and some would never get to it, for they are never out of debt.

"Should I give any of my tithe to help my own relations?" Not if you are legally bound to support them; if not, and objects of charity, yes.

"Should a minister tithe?" Certainly.

"Suppose something is left to me, or given to me, should that be tithed?" Yes, and then its income when invested, but if just that amount is needed for an investment, and by taking the tithe out the opportunity would be lost, the tithe should only be taken from the income. All such cases are to be left to the individual judgment, only try to follow the principle.

"How should I use or divide the tithe fund?" Any way you think best, but remember the fund is for the Lord's work exclusively, especially that which honors the church; therefore the church should be liberally supported, and all missionary enterprises, which are the work of the church, should receive attention. Charity should have a large place, and institutions of learning that fit men for the ministry. But

having once settled the duty, it will be easy enough to arrange these details, and the management had best be left to the individual and his God. But it will dawn upon one, when the habit has been acquired, that other matters outside the church proper, should be of Christian liberality, the outcome of building upon the foundation—the tithe. Really the tithe belongs to the church.

It is expected that a complaint will be entered just here, a complaint that this is getting the matter down to so fine a point, making it so much a matter of business, that it would make it tiresome to observe. This may seem so at first, but it will be noticed the protest and contention we are making avoids this very thing. We have been protesting all along *against getting the matter of giving down to a fine point*, and the danger of having no point at all. There are those who think they are already giving more than a tenth, and some are, but this is no reason why the matter should not be tested, for "we ought to know we have better memories for our virtues than for our obligations, for the dollars we are giving away than for those we receive or spend upon ourselves." It is easy for even excellent persons who have not tested their givings to exaggerate the amount

to their own minds. To such as are transcending a tenth, and to such who possess the spirit of liberality, it might prove helpful to know how small is their giving when placed alongside of their living, and that their liberality was of an abundance that was not needed for self, but not liberal if the *need* in the call is to be considered. "The advantage of deciding that a consecrated proportion shall take precedence of all other outlay, instead of counting on giving what we have to spare, is that it would materially affect the scale of personal expenditure." The spirit of preference for holy feeling over selfish care should prevail, and the lesson might be needed for self, and as an example to others, in the incentive to worthy emulation. For while it might do for some to be left free, if there were no other considerations beyond themselves, yet for the many it will amount to no more than is now prevalent. We ought not to be afraid of a little trouble in the business in which our heavenly Father has an interest. And we ought to be very anxious to deal fairly with Him. It is not good business to so loosely conduct our own affairs, and why deny to Him a strict account? The trouble all along has been that the church has had no fixedness in its resources, and it has come from this very

thing. It can't be denied that the church has a corporeal existence, and in the eye of the law is considered as a corporation. The church has a financial standing, though not always the best, and if she is to do any business, the objection cannot stand until there is a more fair, just and proportionate dealing from her constituents.

Horace Bushnell says, "There is needed one more revival among Christians—a revival of Christian giving. When that revival comes, the kingdom of God will come in a day."

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